



# Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

## Working



### The Scenario

During an English assignment, Tina, a 13-year old student, wrote about missing school because of her work schedule. In her writings, she described her job at a neighborhood convenience store in which she routinely works a 4-hour night shift on weekdays, and 8-hour shifts on weekends. You contact the parent to confirm if this is accurate and the parent replies, “Yes it’s true. Tina needs to contribute and pay her way. How else will the rent be paid, I am not working.” What do you do?

### Discussion Begins

### What do you do?

**Do you report?** If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don’t, what might happen to the student? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Local Law Enforcement Agency or the Department of Children and Family Services tells you...

...to **handle it administratively**, what do you do next?

...**they will investigate**, what do you do next?

### Filing a Report

If an employee does not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, he/she may ask clarifying questions; however, if an employee has reasonable suspicion, he/she must file a Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) without further questioning.

In order to comply with the mandated reporting requirements, an employee must always file a SCAR if

he/she has reasonable suspicion of child abuse, even if the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) or the Local Law Enforcement Agency indicates to “handle it administratively.”

Required steps for filing a SCAR:

- (1) Phone call immediately or ASAP to a Child Protective Agency (CPA)
- (2) Written report mailed to the CPA within 36 hours of receiving the information

SCARs must be filed with a CPA – either DCFS or a Local Law Enforcement Agency. Generally, reports are filed with the DCFS if they involve allegations of abuse or neglect by an in-home perpetrator. Generally, reports are filed with a Local Law Enforcement Agency if they involve allegations of abuse by a District employee or an out-of-home perpetrator or allegations of moderate to severe abuse by an in-home perpetrator.

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## Legal Response

This situation may be sufficient for you to form a reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred under the category of “neglect”. Accordingly, if you have reasonable suspicion, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

In general, compulsory school attendance laws provide that children between the ages of 6 and 18 must attend school full time. Also, children between the ages of 12 to 13 may only work on non-school days. Notwithstanding the above, it is clear that 13 year old Tina is missing school because of her work schedule which may constitute suspected child abuse under the category of neglect. For example, neglect in this case would include a parent or caretaker who causes or permits the child to be placed in a situation such that the child’s person or health is endangered. This includes intentionally or negligently failing to provide adequate food, clothing shelter, medical care or preventing the child to attend school.

## Other Considerations

What do you do if Tina was 17 years old?

What if she was passing all classes in spite of having poor attendance?

## Emotional Support

### Listen

Hearing about this student situation may elicit a strong emotional response. Validate Tina’s concerns. Listen carefully, pay attention, and convey your concern and interest in Tina’s well-being, thereby helping her to feel safe. You may want to take notes to help with remembering details to be included in the SCAR.

### Protect

Act immediately by following the legal response. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment.

### Connect

Convey concern for Tina’s well-being. Every school site has protocols, systems, and resources to support and address student safety and well-being. This is an opportunity to become familiar with and use the procedures, policies, and resources at your work site and community to assist the family.

### Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions. Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.

### Teach

Help Tina understand that it is normal for her to have a confusing range of feelings as a result of working and trying to maintain her school responsibilities. Remind Tina that she did the right thing by writing about her experiences and thoughts and that she did not do anything wrong. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

