



# Breaking the Silence

## Child Abuse Awareness Training

# Rumors



### The Scenario

You have overheard students talking about a female student being a “ho.” The student that they are speaking of often dresses provocatively and falls asleep in class. Yesterday she came to school with a name/word tattooed on her face. You also hear that her adult “boyfriend” drops her off and picks her up at school every day. 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?

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

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

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

### Filing a Report

An employee may ask clarifying questions to determine if the incident meets the standard of reasonable suspicion of child abuse.

Employees who have a reasonable suspicion of child abuse must always file a SCAR, even if the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) or the Local Law Enforcement Agency advises to “handle it administratively.”

Required steps for filing a SCAR:

1. Immediately or as soon as possible report the suspected child abuse to a Child Protective Agency (CPA) (law enforcement agency or DCFS)
2. Mail the written SCAR report to the CPA within 36 hours

SCARs must be filed with a CPA. The report should be made to a Local Law Enforcement Agency or to DCFS. Generally, reports are filed with DCFS if it is suspected that the alleged perpetrator is in the home, that family is involved, or that the family is unresponsive to the abuse. Reports are filed with a Local Law Enforcement Agency if the allegations involve abuse by an out-of-home perpetrator.

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## Legal Response

The safety and well-being of every student must be the first and foremost priority for all educators. As such, immediate action should be taken to remove any student from any situation which threatens her/his safety or well-being.

This scenario may involve a youth sex trafficking situation, which rises to a level of reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Accordingly, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA. For students who are in imminent danger, a reporter should call the Local Law Enforcement Agency. To protect the student, the reporter should send the student, accompanied by a staff person, to another area of the campus or to the school nurse while the conference continues. This may provide you an opportunity to stall for the police to arrive.

Human trafficking is a serious federal crime. It is defined as: (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt, bondage, or slavery. Also, those who recruit minors into commercial sexual exploitation or prostitution violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no force, fraud, or coercion.

## Emotional Support

### Listen

Children who are being sexually exploited will often deny the abuse and may not realize they are victims, instead believing that their exploiter or “pimp” is their boyfriend/girlfriend. Ask open-ended questions that are not of an accusatory nature and actively listen to their response. By showing that you are interested and supportive, you are giving them an outlet to explore options.

### Protect

Observe who the student is leaving with after school. If the person seems to be an adult, take note of their characteristics. This information may be relevant to your report. Follow your school's safety plan and comply with your legal obligations to report suspected child abuse.

### Connect

Convey concern for the student'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.

### Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions regardless of the student's response. Do not express shock, anger or disbelief at the alleged perpetrator or event. Do not push the student to make a disclosure or attempt to convince the student that she/he is a victim.

### Teach

Teach students to seek help and identify supportive adults at home and school. Students may have different reactions, even to the same event. Create an environment where students are safe and healthy to learn and achieve academically.

