



# Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

## A Mother's Message



### The Scenario

The campus security brings Talia to your office. She was caught engaging in sexual activity with three boys behind the bungalows. Talia is indignant and adversarial. She has been a struggling student with erratic attendance. She recently reunited with her mother after having been in foster placement. You call her mother, who storms in later that day annoyed that you bothered her. You explain the situation. Mother responds, "Talia doesn't need to waste her time on school. She is so pretty that men pay for her looks." They walk out together. What do you do?

### Discussion Begins

How do the ages and gender of the students involved affect your actions? What actions do you take with the other involved parties?

### 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 sexual exploitation or neglect, 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.

### Other Considerations

This scenario may involve a youth sex trafficking situation. 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.

Be mindful that there are multiple parties involved. The parents of the other students must be notified of the incident in a timely manner. A SCAR must be filed for each suspected case of child abuse following district policy and legal requirements.

## Emotional Support

### Listen

Talia's behavior would be considered socially inappropriate at any age. Children who are being sexually exploited will often deny the abuse and may not realize they are victims. It is not uncommon for a family member to actively or tacitly encourage commercial sexual activity. 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

Act immediately by following all district policies for reporting suspected child abuse. Take note of the responses given when discussing with parents of all parties involved in the incident. 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 well-being of all involved parties. 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 Talia or the others involved. 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 identify supportive adults at home and school. Teach concepts of healthy relationships. Students may express different reactions to the same event.

