



Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

A Graphic T-Shirt



The Scenario

A student, Patricia, arrives at school wearing an over-sized t-shirt with inappropriate language and images of drug paraphernalia. When you ask her why she is wearing the t-shirt, she informs you that it is her father's and that all of her own clothing is dirty. What do you do?

Discussion Begins

Does what you do depend on Patricia's age or grade level? What if she's a 1st grader? A 5th grader? A middle school student? A high school student?

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to Patricia? 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

General neglect is defined as the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision when there is no physical injury. If any of these conditions are severe enough to impact the child's health or safety, or results in an injury to the child, it is considered to be severe neglect.

Facts presented here may not provide reasonable suspicion for filing a SCAR. If based upon your initial observation you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask age appropriate clarifying questions such as, "You said your clothes are dirty and you had nothing else to wear. Who helps you wash your clothes?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse due to neglect occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Other Considerations

Regardless of the student's age, the student is to follow the dress code or the uniform policy (unless exempt). You should respond to the inappropriate clothing as stated in the District's and school's dress code policies [Student Dress Codes/Uniforms (BUL-2549.1)].

Emotional Support

Listen

Convey your interest and concern for Patricia's well-being. You may want to take notes to help with remembering details to be included in the SCAR.

Protect

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

Connect

Let Patricia know that her shirt is inappropriate. Assure Patricia that there are adults and services on campus to support her daily attendance. Facilitate connection to the appropriate office to give her a replacement shirt for the day and/or other resources. Connecting with the parent/guardian might also be a proactive way to ensure Patricia comes to school ready to learn. It might be necessary to connect the family with outside community resources, as well.

Model

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

Teach

Remind Patricia and her parent/guardian about the District's and school's dress code policies. Help her to problem solve in anticipation of the next time that her laundry is dirty.



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