



Breaking the Silence

Child Abuse Awareness Training

A Parent's Suspicion



The Scenario

A parent shares a suspicious incident between her daughter and a certain male teacher. She had been concerned that her daughter, Rachel, was spending too much time with this male teacher. Recently, when the daughter did not show up at the scheduled pick-up time, the parent went to the teacher's room in an attempt to locate her daughter. Finding a locked door, the parent knocked for a long time. When the teacher finally answered the door, the parent saw Rachel, whose clothes were disheveled, exiting through a back door. Rachel is adamant that nothing improper occurred. 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 Rachel? To other students? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Department of Children and Family Services or Local Law Enforcement Agency 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 conduct is sufficient for you to form a reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred. Accordingly, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Other Considerations

Whether you have reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, there is sufficient information to determine that improper conduct may have occurred (e.g., LAUSD Code of Conduct). You should notify an administrator of the possible inappropriate conduct. The administrator should then notify the Local District (LD) Operations Coordinator. At this time, the LD Administrator of Operations must exercise discretion as to whether the employee should be removed from the school site or work assignment (BUL-6532.1, Protocols and Procedures to Report, Reassign and Investigate Allegations of Employee Misconduct).

The site administrator/division supervisor will inform the Local District/Division of law enforcement's determination as to whether the District may proceed with or should refrain from conducting an administrative investigation. Once clearance has been obtained from the Local Law Enforcement Agency, the administrative investigation shall proceed. Upon conclusion of the investigation, appropriate administrative action will be taken, if warranted.

Emotional Support

Listen

The information reported to you may elicit a strong emotional reaction. It is important to listen to the parent and ask clarifying questions. Taking notes might be helpful with remembering the details to be included in the SCAR.

Protect

The situation must be addressed by following mandated child abuse reporting procedures. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment. Let the parent and student know that you take her safety seriously.

Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being to the parent. 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 to help them achieve balance and restore a calm environment. Do not express shock, anger or disbelief at the possible perpetrator or event.

Teach

Take this opportunity to review the District policy regarding appropriate teacher/student boundaries. Refer to the LAUSD Code of Conduct with Students. Inform the parent that by reporting her concern, she acted in the best interest of the student.

