Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect

Guidance for Educators
Overview

- Types of Abuse & Warning Signs
- Summary of Law
- Mandatory Reporting
- Key Messages Educators Can Support Following Child Abuse Prevention Programming
- How Children/Students Might Disclose Abuse
- Communication Tips: Responding When A Student Discloses S/He Has Been Abused
What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is when a parent or caregiver, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm or risk of serious harm to a child. There are many forms of child maltreatment, including neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation and emotional abuse.

Types of Abuse
Physical Abuse
Physical abuse is any non-accidental act that results in physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonably severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable punishment. This usually happens when a person is frustrated or angry and strikes, shakes, or throws the child. Intentional, deliberate assault, such as burning, biting, cutting, poking, twisting limbs, or otherwise torturing a child, is also included in this category of child abuse.

Emotional Abuse
Emotional child abuse is maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development. It involves words, actions, and indifference. Abusers constantly reject, ignore, belittle, dominate, and criticize the victims. This form of abuse may occur with or without physical abuse, but there is often an overlap.

Sexual Abuse
Sexual child abuse is a type of maltreatment, violation, and exploitation that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator. It includes contact for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexually exploitative activities.

Verbal Abuse
Verbal assault (belittling, screaming, threats, blaming, sarcasm), unpredictable responses, continual negative moods, constant family discord, and chronically communicating conflicting messages are examples of ways parents may subject their children to emotional abuse.

Child neglect is when a parent or caregiver does not give the care, supervision, affection and support needed for a child’s health, safety and well-being. Child neglect includes:

- Physical neglect and inadequate supervision
- Emotional neglect
- Medical neglect
- Educational neglect
Warning Signs of Abuse
Signs of Physical Abuse

**Physical:**
- Visible and severe injuries
- Injuries at different stages of healing
- On different surfaces of the body
- Unexplained or explained in a way that doesn’t make sense
- Distinctive shape
- Frequency, timing and history of injuries (frequent, after weekends, vacations, school absences)

**Behavioral:**
- Aggression toward peers, pets, other animals
- Seems afraid of parents or other adults
- Fear, withdrawal, depression, anxiety
- Wears long sleeves out of season
- Violent themes in fantasy, art, etc.
- Nightmares, insomnia
- Reports injury, severe discipline
- Immaturity, acting out, emotional and behavior extremes
- Self-destructive behavior or attitudes

https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/
Signs of Emotional Abuse

**Physical:**
- Visible and severe injuries
- Wetting bed, pants
- Speech disorders
- Health problems like ulcers, skin disorders
- Obesity and weight fluctuation
- Frequency, timing and history of injuries (frequent, after weekends, vacations, school absences)

**Behavioral:**
- Apathy, withdrawal, and lack of response to human interaction
- Seems afraid of parents or other adults
- Self-destructive/self-harming
- Wears long sleeves out of season
- Violent themes in fantasy, art, etc.
- Nightmares, insomnia
- Behavior that is inappropriate for age (too adult, too infantile)
- Immaturity, acting out, emotional and behavior extremes

https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/
Signs of Verbal Abuse

**Physical:**
- Wetting bed, pants
- Health problems like ulcers, skin disorders
- Delayed development. The slowdown may appear in your child's physical, social, academic, or emotional development—may have difficulty making friends, fall behind in school, or engage in regressive acts such as rocking, and/or thumb-sucking

**Behavioral:**
- Negative self-image. This is the most common and pervasive effect of verbal abuse. Your child may say things like, "I'm stupid," or "Nobody likes me."
- May be withdrawn, sullen, or depressed, all of which can be signs of a low self-image. In defining emotional abuse, the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse says that it "attacks a child's... sense of self-worth."
- Self-destructive acts/Self-Injury.
- Antisocial behavior (i.e., physical aggression, delinquency, and interpersonal problems).

https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse/
Signs of Neglect

- Comes to school hungry
- Not dressed for the weather
- Poor appearance and hygiene
- Poor weight gain and growth
- Has chronic untreated illnesses
Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment
Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child’s contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family

Summary of Indiana Child Abuse Laws
Mandatory Reporting Requirements
Indiana Code § 31-33-5-1

› ANY person who has a reason to believe a child (student) is a victim of abuse or neglect has a duty to make a report to the Department of Child Services (DCS) or the police. If you hear about or see child abuse/neglect you must report it immediately.

› If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected call Indiana’s Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-800-5556 or local law enforcement. The police and/or DCS are the appropriate authorities to investigate these matters. Please do not ask the child questions that may interfere with the formal investigation.
Quick Tips: What Can You Do?

- Always be supportive to the child/student.

- Follow your school’s policy and procedures.

- Inform an administrator and/or the school counselor/school social worker about the report that you made. However, it is important that YOU make the report. At times, a DCS professional will come to the school to interview the student. It is helpful when the administration and/or student service professionals have this information so they are well informed and can be helpful when the DCS professional arrives.

- It is important to document what you have seen and/or heard (if the information was told to you—document the story). It is possible that you may be contacted in the future.

- *Again, check with your school’s specific policy and procedures on documentation.
IC 20-26-5-35.5

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

A school corporation, charter school; or nonpublic school that employs one or more employees may not establish a policy that restricts or delays the duty of an employee or individual to report suspected child abuse or neglect as required under IC 31-33-5.
IC 20-30-5-5.7

Research and Evidence-based Instruction on Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse

_Not later than December 15 each year_

Every public school, including a charter school and accredited nonpublic school, shall provide age appropriate, research and evidence-based instruction on child abuse and child sexual abuse to students in kindergarten through grade 12.

Instruction may be delivered by a school safety specialist, school counselor, or any other person with training and expertise in the area of child abuse and child sexual abuse.
**IC 20-28-3-4.5**

**School Employee Training**

Each school corporation, charter school, and accredited nonpublic school shall require each school employee likely to have **direct, ongoing contact** with children within the scope of the employment to participate in training on child abuse and neglect, to include: the duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect under IC 31-33-5; and recognizing possible signs of child abuse or neglect, at least every **two years**.

The training format may include an in-person presentation; electronic or technology-based medium, including self-review modules available on an online system; an individual program of study of designated materials; or any other method approved by the governing body that is consistent with current professional development standards. The training may count toward the requirements for professional development required by the governing body and must be during the employee’s contracted day or at a time chosen by the employee.
Mandatory Reporting
Mandatory Reporting Requirements: FAQ

Your Report Could Save A Life
When is a report required?

Any reason to believe that a student is a victim of child abuse (of any kind), human trafficking, or neglect.

Where does the report go?

Oral reports shall be made to the Department of Child Services, which hosts a toll-free child abuse hotline (1-800-800-5556) or the local law enforcement agency.
What will I need to provide when making a report?

If you call to make a report, an Intake Specialist will ask you for information about the circumstances creating a risk of harm to the child including who was involved, what occurred, when and where it occurred, the extent of any injuries sustained, and any other relevant information.
What will I need to provide when making a report? (cont.)

When you contact the Hotline, you will be asked for information about the parties involved (victim, parent(s)/guardian(s), perpetrator) and the specific allegations giving rise to the call. Information you will be asked to provide may include:

1. Child Information: name, age, address, current location, person caring for child, and need/receiving medical treatment

2. Parent/Guardian Information: name, address, phone number as well as any domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal history, mental health issues, or past CPS (Child Protection Services) history

3. Alleged Perpetrator Information: name, address, phone number, relation to the child, behavioral issues, and other children who may be at risk

4. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect allegations: what happened, when, where, timeframe, and specific conditions

It is okay if you cannot provide all of the information above. Any details you can provide will be helpful to the case. The information you provide will be reviewed and will help determine next steps. Do NOT wait for someone else to make the call – your call may be the critical first step in protecting a child.
After The Report Is Made

Following the call, it is important to document the report. It is likely if there is an investigation, it is possible that you may be asked to be interviewed. It is best if you have written notes of the report you have given.

Additionally, while YOU must make the report, it is best to notify an administrator and/or student services employee about the report too. Sharing this information is helpful to best support this student during this difficult time.
Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Can Be Difficult

Talking about child abuse can bring up multiple feelings and thoughts. Even though you know it is your legal duty, taking action can be difficult. You care and support your students and know it is the ‘right’ decision, but you may still:

- Doubt your own judgment and feel disbelief that this could happen in this family (possibly you have a personal connection to this family).
- Fear that the parents may threaten you or further harm the student.
- Fear that the student will be withdrawn from your classroom or school.
- Feel nervous about dealing with authorities because of bad past experiences.
- Have strong emotions about child abuse because of your own past trauma.

https://cchp.ucsf.edu/sites/cchp.ucsf.edu/files/11_CCHC_Child_Abuse_0406.pdf
PLEASE REMEMBER,
Your silence and secrecy works to aid the abuser
Make the Report—
It is Your Duty!
Key Messages Educators Can Support Following Child Abuse Prevention Programming
These are the messages that should be communicated through the programming efforts of the child abuse prevention programming.
Key Messages/Themes

- Students can identify touching and non-touching forms of abuse and can describe private and public parts of the body.

- Be prepared for questions and it is common for reports of abuse to increase following presentations about child abuse.

- Students know that child abuse offenders can be anyone (they can give basic descriptors of how they would describe a potential offender and know how and where to make a report to as well as what to report).

- Support students in building this knowledge and practicing these skills.
Key Messages/Themes

Students know that abuse (all forms) is illegal and can happen to anyone

~Continue to reinforce the message that abuse can happen to anyone and it is NEVER the victims fault

Students recognize that educators are resources and can help them to stay and feel safe

~Be present and engaged in students’ lives—show care and concern and ready to listen and act in the event you learn that a student is in an abusive relationship
How Children/Students Might Disclose Abuse
How Children Might Tell/Share

PK-5th Grade

- Accidental disclosure
- Talk about what happened out of the blue
- Regressive behaviors (i.e., thumb sucking, poor bladder control, baby talk, etc.)
- May see behaviors through play with toys and other children
- Expressed through Art/Drawing
- Journaling

- Inappropriate touching of self or others
- Behaviors that are sexual in nature, seen with other same age children or children who are younger
- Children tell a trusted friend who tells an adult
- Children tell a counselor or teacher at school (or other trusted adult)
- Children tell parent/guardian
How Children Might Tell/Share
6-12th Grade

- Accidental disclosure
- Expressed through Art/Drawing
- Behaviors that are sexual in nature, seen with other same age children or children who are younger
- Students tell a trusted friend who tells an adult
- Students tell a counselor or teacher at school (or other trusted adult)
- Students tell parent/guardian

- Someone discovers the abuse (walks in on it, sees a post about it online, reads about it in diary, etc.)
- Student gets visibly upset/agitated during school presentation on abuse topic
- Post online that another student shares with school employee
- Reported about a "friend of a friend" but it is actually about the student
- English writing assignment
Why Students Choose To Stay Silent

- Fear no one will believe them
- Shame, embarrassment, guilt, confusion
- Threats by abuser to hurt them, their family or pet if they tell. It is very common that their abuser has told them repeatedly that they will hurt them or possibly kill them (or their loved ones) if they tell anyone
- Students do not know who to tell or how to tell
- They may not recognize that they have been abused (especially young kids). They may think this is how love is shown, especially if the abuser is telling them this message
- Fear of what will happen (taken away from parents, can’t be there to protect another sibling, etc.)
Communication Tips: What are best ways to respond?
When Talking With Students
- Things To Remember

- Be aware of your nonverbal communication: do not appear shocked or surprised, as a strong reaction may affect the student’s comfort level and may deter the student from continuing to share.

- Allow the student to tell his/her story without asking probing/leading questions.

- Just listen and be supportive—it is not your responsibility to determine if this is truthful or a substantiated case of abuse.
Helpful & Unhelpful Responses

Helpful Prompts

“I appreciate your bravery for sharing. I am going to stay with you and I do need to contact someone whose job is to keep all students safe.”

“I know that took a lot of courage to share ...”

“I believe you.”

“Tell me more about...”

Unhelpful Prompts

“Are you sure that is how it happened?”

“Why haven’t you told someone about this sooner?”

“I have known your family for years. I can’t imagine this happening. I think you might be confused.”

PLEASE AVOID “WHY” QUESTIONS
A child just disclosed sexual abuse to me. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

1. Say, “I believe you, and it’s not your fault.”
   DO ask open-ended questions: "Then what happened?"
   DON’T express anger or disbelief.

2. Conduct a “minimal fact” interview.
   DO determine what, where, when, and by whom, if possible.
   DON’T ask leading questions or probe for details.

   DO tell law enforcement/child protective services.
   DON’T attempt further investigation.
   DON’T promise not to tell anyone.

MORE THAN 90% OF THE TIME, THE CHILD IS TELLING THE TRUTH.
When Talking With Students - Other Things To Remember

Explain, in a developmentally appropriate way, that you are a mandatory reporter and will need to share this information—the reason for sharing is only to keep the student safe.

Students may be fearful of others finding about their abuse issues. The educator should assure the student that the information would not be shared with classmates or others who have no need to know. It is vital, however, that the educator also acknowledge that in order to provide help, it may be necessary to discuss these issues with other school personnel, law enforcement, or DCS. It is important that the educator abides by the promise to protect the child’s right to confidentiality as much as possible and only disclose the details that are needed.
PLEASE review your school’s policy to ensure you are also following the guidelines set forth in the procedures and policy approved by your school corporation.
Child Abuse Hotlines

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger contact law enforcement as soon as possible.

Indiana Department of Child Services by calling 800-800-5556

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana
Phone: 317.775.6439
Email: generalinfo.pca@villages.org

To get help in the U.S., call:
1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) – Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

To get help for child sexual abuse, call:
1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368) – Stop It Now
1-800-656-HOPE Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)