



Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect - Training for All School Employees



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<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/can.html>

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Introduction

- Watching this webcast meets the legal requirement for school district employees to obtain training by the Department of Public Instruction
- Thanks to the Department of Children & Families for its assistance in developing this presentation



Overview of Presentation

- This presentation will cover these different kinds of child maltreatment
 - Neglect
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional damage
 - Sexual abuse
- Warning signs



Overview of Presentation

(continued)

- What is not child abuse or neglect
- How to make a report & what to report
- What you can do if you are not sure if you need to make a report
- Where to get more information



What is Neglect?

- Neglect means the failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for the basic needs of a child to the point that it seriously endangers a child's physical health
- Neglect can be related to inadequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision
- It is not considered neglect if poverty is the only reason a child has inadequate care



Who are “caregivers”?

- Caregivers include ...
 - Parents/guardians
 - Other relatives, including older siblings
 - Foster parents
 - Child care providers
 - Babysitters
 - Teachers & other educators
 - Live-in partners of parents, even if they care for the child only occasionally



Warning Signs of Possible Neglect

Regular or frequent ...

- soiled clothing or inadequate clothing for the weather
- hunger, hoarding or stealing food, poor nutrition
- listlessness or fatigue



Warning Signs of Possible Neglect (continued)

Regular or frequent ...

- poor hygiene
 - odor of urine or feces
 - very bad breath
 - dirty or decaying teeth
- untreated medical problems



Warning Signs of Possible Neglect (continued)

Regular or frequent ...

- poor relationships
- withdrawal from others
- craving attention, even to the point of getting negative responses from others
- low self-esteem



Warning Signs of Possible Neglect (continued)

A child who is regularly or frequently cared for by another child who is too young or immature to be responsible for others could be neglected



Using the Warning Signs of Neglect

- You can use these warning signs & the questions below to help determine if a report needs to be made
 - How many warning signs do you see?
 - Are the warning signs regular or frequent?
 - Could the student's physical health be seriously endangered?



What is Physical Abuse?

- Physical abuse is a physical injury inflicted on a child that is not an accident
- Physical injury includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising, or great bodily harm
 - The injury must be severe enough to meet this definition of a physical injury in order to be considered physical abuse



What is Physical Abuse?

- The person need not intend to hurt the child for it to be physical abuse
- Examples of abusive behavior where the person did not intend to harm the child
 - Shaking a crying baby out of frustration
 - Swinging a baseball bat in a reckless manner & injuring a child



Warning Signs of Physical Abuse



- Children commonly get bruises & bumps from play & activity on knees, elbows, forearms & brows
- Warning signs of physical abuse that are less likely to be from accidents include ...
 - Bruises around the cheeks, abdomen, thighs, or midway between the wrist & elbow
 - Bruises that are different colors
 - Bruises that are in the shape of an object
 - Bruises on multiple parts of the body



Warning Signs of Physical Abuse (continued)

- Marks that may have come from an object, like an electrical cord or belt buckle
- Complaints of soreness or stiffness
- Awkward movements that appear to be caused by pain
- Bald spots that may come from having hair pulled severely



Warning Signs of Physical Abuse (continued)

- Adult-sized, human bite marks
- Burns, especially from objects like cigarettes & irons



Using the Warning Signs of Physical Abuse

- You can use these warning signs & the questions below to help determine if a report needs to be made
 - Does the student's explanation for the injury make sense to you?
 - Is the student evasive about sharing how the injury occurred?



What is Emotional Damage?

- Emotional damage is harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning
- Emotional damage is observed in:
 - severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or aggressive behavior, or
 - a substantial change in the child's behavior, emotional response or thinking that is not normal for the child's age or development



Emotional Damage

Educators are to report if ...

- they see warning signs of emotional damage in a student, AND
- the parent has not obtained treatment for the child or taken other steps to improve the child's symptoms

Note: A report should not be made if poverty is the only reason the parent has not obtained treatment for the child



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage

Young child's behavior or physical symptoms

- rocking, head-banging
- cruelty to animals, especially pets
- wetting or soiling themselves



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage (continued)

Emotional reactions

- crying without apparent cause
- sudden fearful behavior
- feelings of having little self-worth
- talking about being broken or damaged
- inappropriate emotions, such as turning bad experiences into jokes or laughing when the student is actually in pain



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage (continued)

Learning

- withdrawal from learning
- difficulty concentrating or learning new material
- compulsive attention to detail
- a drop in school performance
- sudden lack of participation in school activities



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage (continued)

Physical symptoms

- frequent headaches or stomachaches
- unexplained weight loss or gain



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage (continued)

Self-destructive or delinquent behavior of adolescents

- abusing alcohol or drugs
- an eating disorder
- talk of suicide
- self-injury, such as cutting



Warning Signs of Possible Emotional Damage (continued)

Other warning signs

- Reporting sleep problems or nightmares
- Attempting to run away from home
- Setting fires & enjoying watching them



Using the Warning Signs of Emotional Damage

You can use these warning signs & the questions below to help determine if a report needs to be made

- Does the student demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or aggressive behavior?
- Has the parent obtained treatment for the child or tried some other way to improve the child's symptoms?



What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behavior with a child & includes any inappropriate sexual touching

- fondling or exposing genitals (abuser's or child's)
- intercourse
- sexual exploitation
- exposure to pornography
- having a child view or listen to sexual activity
- allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution



Warning Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Extreme secrecy, compliance or withdrawal
- An unusual fear of people from 1 gender or with specific characteristics, such as a deep voice
- Very seductive behavior



Warning Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse (continued)

- Unusual knowledge about sex for the student's age & development
- Sexual play with peers that goes beyond curiosity
- Note: Sexual curiosity & behaviors that are developmentally normal for pre-adolescent children are not sexual abuse



Sexually active adolescents

- Situations with sexually active adolescents may have to be reported, depending upon these 3 factors:
 - Whether the sexual activity is voluntary or involuntary,
 - The age of the student, &
 - Whether the student has accessed health care services, such as seeking out information about birth control



Sexually active adolescents

(continued)

- This complex topic is specifically addressed in
 - The DPI webcast “Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect – Supplemental Information” &
 - The DPI publication “Reporting Requirements for Sexually Active Adolescents”
- Both of these resources can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/can.html>



Using the Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse

You can use these warning signs & the questions below to help determine if a report needs to be made

- Has the student had sexual contact with another person?
- Has the student been exploited sexually in some way?
- Has the student been exposed to sexual content?



What is not child abuse or neglect?



- Failure to give prescribed medication to a child, unless it threatens the child's life or health
 - Student with ADHD
 - Student with diabetes
- Truancy
 - Follow provisions in Wis. Stat. 118.16
- Self-injury, such as cutting, or suicide threats
 - Failure by the parent to get necessary treatment might be reason to report suspected emotional damage



Who Must Report

All school district employees must immediately report to county Child Protective Services or local law enforcement, if they believe a child they have seen as part of their work ...

- has been abused or neglected, or
- has been threatened with abuse or neglect & they believe it will occur



Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

- A report must be made to county Child Protective Services or local law enforcement
 - You should contact law enforcement when there is immediate danger to a student
- A report must be made immediately by phone or in person



Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (continued)

- The law prohibits anyone who makes a report in good faith from being fired, disciplined or otherwise discriminated against in regard to employment, or from being threatened with any such treatment
- A reporter is protected from both civil & criminal liability



Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (continued)

- A report is to be kept confidential
 - The county, local law enforcement & the school district may not share any identifying information about a school employee who makes a report
- There are penalties for not reporting
 - Fine of up to \$1,000 & up to 6 months in jail



Does it matter who is suspected of abusing or neglecting the child?

- Reports related to physical or sexual abuse must be made regardless of who, if anyone, is suspected of being involved
- Reports related to neglect should be made only about a caregiver
- Reports related to emotional damage should be made only if the parents are suspected of not seeking treatment that the student needs



What if you're not sure?

- It is common for someone to be unsure if a report should be made
- It is OK to talk to someone else who can help to determine if a report is necessary
 - Pupil services professional or school administrator
 - County Child Protective Services or law enforcement - no need to mention names
- Talking to someone else may not delay a report



What to Report

When you make a report, Child Protective Services will want to know ...

- Information about the student, parent(s), suspected abuser - names, addresses, relationships, phone #, student's date of birth
- Specifics of the observed injury – what, where
- Any statements made by the student



What to Report (continued)

When you make a report, Child Protective Services will want to know ...

- Any prior concerns you may have about possible mistreatment of the student that may not have required a report at that time
- Relevant cultural context, if any



What to Report (continued)

Be prepared to offer this information

- Does the suspected perpetrator have access to the student?
- Do you have any concerns for the student's immediate safety?
- Does anyone else know about the suspected abuse or neglect?
- Are there other children in the household? If so, what are their ages?



Making the Report

- It's OK to ask the intake worker questions (e.g., What will happen next?)
- You may wish to document your report
 - Date
 - What you reported
 - What agency you reported to
 - The name & contact information of the person you reported to



Sources for More Information

- Department of Public Instruction
<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/can.html>
- Department of Children & Families
<http://dcf.wi.gov/children/CPS/index.htm>



Sources for More Information

(continued)

- County departments of social services
- Police-school liaison officers or other local law enforcement officers
- School counselors, nurses, psychologists, social workers & administrators



Here is what we covered

- Definitions of child abuse & neglect
- Warning signs
- What is not child abuse or neglect
- How to make a report & what to report
- What you can do if you are not sure if you need to make a report
- Where to get more information