



Child Safety: An Overview for the Education Community

Office of Child Safety, Training and Development
2020



T.C.A.37-1-605(d) (1)

If a school teacher, school official, or any other school personnel has knowledge of reasonable cause to suspect that a child who attends such school may be a victim of child abuse or child sexual abuse sufficient to require reporting pursuant to this section and that such abuse occurred on school grounds or while the child was under the care of the school, then the principal or other person designated shall verbally notify the parent or legal guardian of such child that a report pursuant to this information has been made and shall provide other information relevant to the future well being of the child while under supervision or care of the school.

T.C.A.37-1-605(d) (1)

Such verbal notice shall be made in coordination with the Department of Children's Services to the parent or legal guardian within twenty-four (24) hours from the time the school, school teacher, school official, or other school personnel reports such abuse to the Department of Children's Services, judge, or law enforcement; provided that in no event may the notice be later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time such report was made. Such notice shall not be sent to any parent or legal guardian if there is reasonable cause to believe that such parent or legal guardian may be the perpetrator or in any way responsible for the child abuse or child sexual abuse.

Making a referral to DCS



- ❑ The Child Abuse Hotline has a number specifically for school staff to report abuse/neglect so that your call will be answered quicker than calls from the general public. The number is **855-209-4226**.
- ❑ **Non-urgent** referrals can also be made online (apps.tn.gov/carat)
- ❑ When making a referral, it is important to call the Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible, as opposed to waiting until the end of the school day.

Information to have on hand



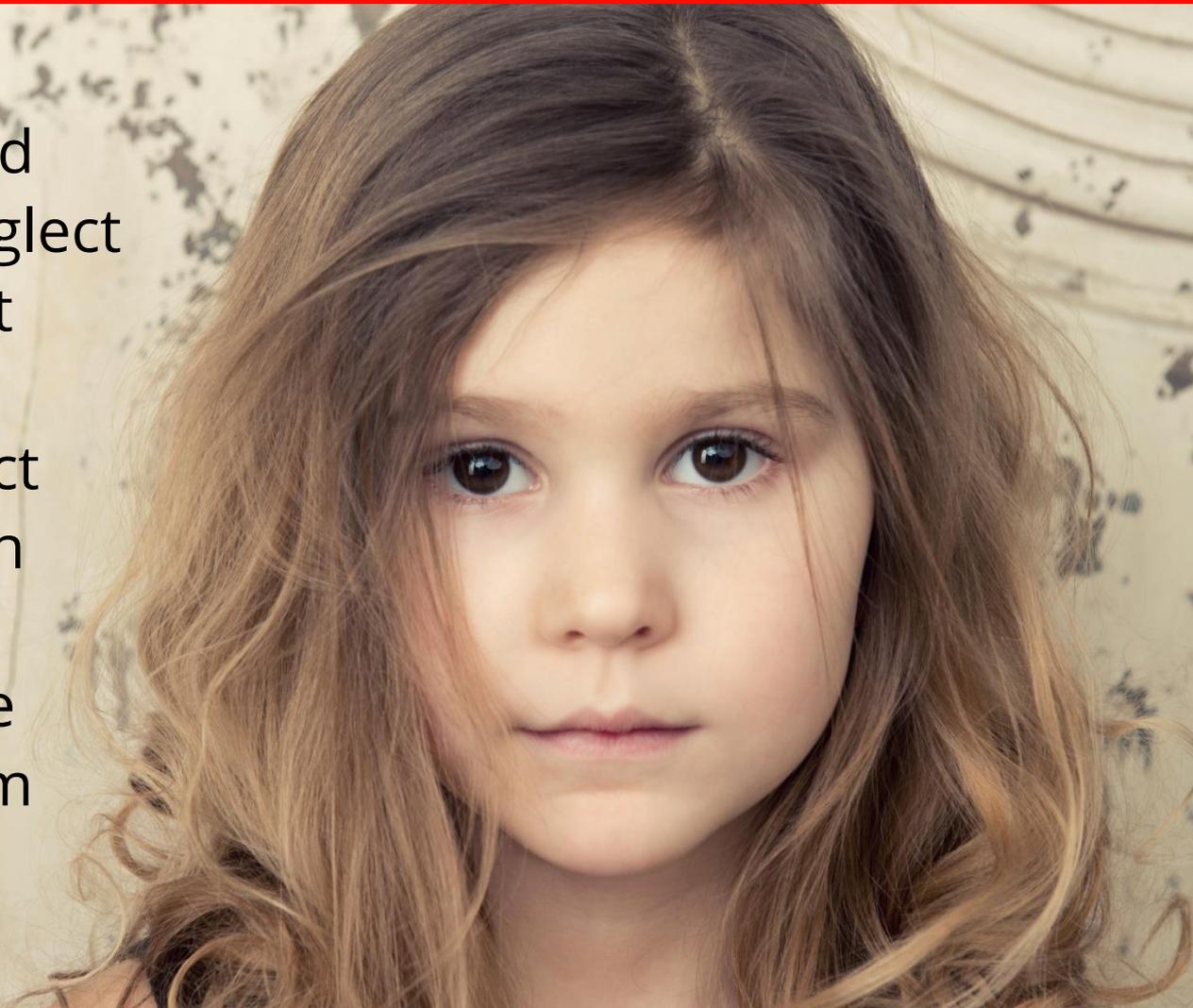
- ❑ The following information on the child(ren) and their household members/caretakers:
 - ❑ Name
 - ❑ DOB or estimated ages
 - ❑ Relations to one another
 - ❑ Address or directions
 - ❑ Phone or other contact information

- ❑ Does the child or anyone else have any special needs/disabilities? Do they have an IEP?
 - ❑ This information could impact the level of risk to the child.

- ❑ Your school's hours of operation and if there are breaks approaching (Christmas break, summer vacation, etc.)

Allegation Specific Questions Asked

- Physical Abuse
- Drug Exposed Child
- Environmental Neglect
- Nutritional Neglect
- Medical Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Lack of Supervision
- Abandonment
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Psychological Harm
- Abuse or Neglect
Death



Reporting Educational Neglect

- ❑ School staff will want to inform the Child Abuse Hotline where they are in their Truancy Intervention plan.
- ❑ DCS is unable to assign an allegation of educational neglect unless the school has demonstrated attempts to correct the situation under the Three Tier Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan (Attendance Policy 6200).



Reporting Suspected Physical Abuse/Injuries

When reporting any physical injuries, it is helpful to provide a detailed description of the injuries, including:

- Size
- Shape
- Location
- Color
- Pattern

It is also helpful to provide the following information:

- You will also want to provide Is the child reported to be in pain?
- Does the child need or have received medical attention?
- What did the child say about how the injury was caused?
- Do you feel the injuries match the story given?

Do you suspected Sexual Abuse ?

- ❑ Sexuality is a natural part of childhood development just like language, motor skills, cognitive development.

- ❑ Sexual behavior involves “sexual body parts” including
 - ❑ Touching
 - ❑ Looking
 - ❑ Talking

- ❑ Some sexual behavior is a healthy, normal part of childhood development, while other behaviors are problematic

Sexual Behaviors in Children

Natural

- Between children of similar age, size, and developmental status
- All children agree to the behavior
- Tell sexual jokes or use sexual words
- Exploratory, spontaneous, and occurs in the context of play
- Children have light-hearted feelings before, during, and after the behavior
- Children giggling and engaging in the behavior out in the open
- Self-stimulation to explore genitals and sensations
- Engage in mutual touching with similar aged friends or cousins
- Looks at their own bodies and bodies of others
- Child has made no disclosure

Concerning

- Child appears unable to stop him/herself
- Behaviors progress in frequency, intensity, or intrusiveness
- Behaviors accompanied by aggression or anger
- Child appears to have too much knowledge of sexuality and behaves in ways consistent with adult sexual behaviors
- Behaviors continue despite consistent, clear requests to stop
- Behaviors interfere with social or family relationships
- They are directed towards adults who feel uncomfortable towards the behaviors

Problematic

- Behaviors cause physical or emotional pain or discomfort to self or others
- Preoccupation with the behavior
- Sexual behavior geared towards younger children/inappropriate age range
- Planning how to sexually touch others
- Forcing others (physically or through intimidation) to do sexual acts
- Tricking others into sexual acts
- Any penetration
- Trying to have sexual intercourse with another child or adult
- Putting mouths on genitalia
- Manual stimulation, oral, or genital contact with animals
- Unresponsive to redirection
- The behaviors are negatively affecting other children

Commonly used terms for body parts

- Privates
- Butt
- Front butt
- Pee pee
- Hoo hoo
- Twinkie
- Lollipop
- Winker
- Peter
- Pecker
- Wanker
- Unit
- Kitten
- Pocket book
- Cookie
- Wanker
- Willy
- Pie
- Muffin
- La La
- Tail
- Wiggy
- No No's
- Tootie
- My privacy
- Tee Tees
- No No Square



Reporting Suspected Sexual Abuse Concerns

- ❑ The child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator.
- ❑ Sexual behaviors or situations in which the motivation may or may not be sexual, but there is a clear sexual component.
- ❑ The use of any person under the age of eighteen (18) as defined above in exchange for anything of value either directly or indirectly. Force, threat or coercion is not a factor for Sex Trafficking
- ❑ Child is under 18 and Sex Trafficking
- ❑ Child is 12 and under
- ❑ Child is 13 -17 and the perpetrator is one of the following:
 - ❑ A parent, caretaker, or relative (regardless of where the relative lives)
 - ❑ A person living in the home
 - ❑ An educator or employee/volunteer of a school, recreational or organizational setting who is responsible for the alleged victim.
 - ❑ An individual providing treatment, care, or supervision for the child
 - ❑ If the reporter is unsure about the identity and relationship of an alleged perpetrator

Investigation of Sexual Abuse

- ❑ Per TCA 37-1-406(b), Sexual Abuse allegations against children **must be** investigated by a team of professionals called the Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT). This team consists of CPS staff, local Law Enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Court, and the director of the local Child Advocacy Center.
- ❑ Each partner has a different role, but the purpose of this team approach is to minimize additional trauma to the child victim(s).

So, what do we do instead?

The best possible way for the child welfare system to minimize further trauma to a child who may have been sexually abused is by having the child participate in a Forensic Interview.

Forensic Interview

- ❑ A Forensic Interview is a structured conversation with a child that is intended to elicit detailed information about a possible event that the child may have experienced or witnessed.
 - ❑ Completed in a neutral, child-friendly setting – almost always at the local Child Advocacy Center
 - ❑ Objective, non-leading, developmentally sensitive
 - ❑ Forensic Interviewer is specially trained and skilled at talking with children
 - ❑ Interview is legally defensible – it will stand up in court if the investigation leads to criminal prosecution
 - ❑ Interviews are video recorded and remotely observed by the Law Enforcement and CPS investigators

Minimal Facts Interview

- ❑ May be conducted at school by CPS staff
- ❑ Usually a **brief** interview with a child regarding the allegations of abuse
- ❑ **Only** done when required and in consultation with CPIT partners
- ❑ The goal: minimal questioning to yield information necessary for immediate protection
- ❑ Designed to be a SAFETY INTERVIEW
- ❑ Will assess for the need to seek immediate medical care
- ❑ May not be done at all if the CPS investigator can obtain the needed information from other sources

Reporting on a child with suicidal ideations

If you are contacting the Child Abuse Hotline regarding a child with suicidal ideations or self-harm, some of the things you may be asked are:

- Has the child made a threat of suicide? Already self-harmed?
- Did the child say why they are contemplating suicide?
- Does the child currently have a plan? What is the plan?
- Has the child attempted suicide previously? How many times? When was the last time? What happened?
- Does the child have access to means (guns, knives, prescriptions meds, drugs)?
- Are the parents/caretakers aware of the child's suicidal ideations? Are they protective and supportive?
- Have the parents attempted to find resources to help the child? What are they?
- Does the child need medical attention?
- Is there a safety plan in place? Are the parents abiding by the safety plan?
- Has Mobile Crisis been contacted? Are they responding?
- Does the child have a mental health diagnosis?
- Where is the child now?

When DCS Responds to the School



If at all possible, DCS staff will work with the school to allow minimal disruption to the child's classroom instruction and/or testing.

Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-406 (c)

- ❑ All private schools, church-related schools, and state, county and local schools shall give DCS staff, and Law Enforcement if applicable, access to records in their custody pertaining to the child and shall otherwise cooperate fully with the investigation.

What Information Can DCS Share?

- ❑ Information pertaining to the safety of the child
 - ❑ If a child is placed outside of their home for safety reasons, the school will be provided with that information.

Scenario 1

Two weeks ago, a 6 yr old came to school with a black eye and redness to her jaw. The child said that mom whipped her and then hit her in the face because the child had gotten in trouble at school the day prior. There are two other siblings in this school. The mother has been repeatedly hostile with school staff, yelling and screaming at both office staff and teachers. One of the siblings is terrified (has uncontrollable crying fits) when something happens at school because of how her mother will react. A CPS referral was called in, and investigators responded to the school. Today, the 6 year old was absent from school, and one of the siblings said that his sister is not at school today because she has a big bruise on her leg.

Scenario 2

An 8 year old child at school usually gets good grades, and she participates in extra-curricular activities. The mother and father almost always respond right away when the teacher calls or emails them, and school staff have not previously had safety concerns for this child. Today, the child failed a test. The teacher put the test in the child's backpack and instructed the child to take it to her parents and have them sign it. The child became very upset and began to cry. The child stated she will be in serious trouble when her parents see the test, and that she is afraid to go home because of what her parents will do. The child is unable to state what she thinks may happen when she gets home.

Questions?

