



Division of District Operations

# Breaking the Silence

## Child Abuse Awareness Training

# Please Be My Friend



### The Scenario

During recess, you notice a group of first-grade girls reject the attempts of a shy, little boy to play with them. Apparently, this rejection is a common occurrence and they call him names and tell him that they wish he'd die. 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 the little boy? To the girls? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

At first appearance, this could look like social bullying. However, it is important to remember that one of the qualifiers for bullying is intention. It's unlikely that first graders can conceptualize the potential harm of such statements.

### 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

If based upon the initial student's statements, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask the student clarifying questions such as, "Has this occurred before? What happened? How many times have they said this?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

While clearly inappropriate and objectionable, the behavior was peer-to-peer among 1st graders. Most likely, this does not rise to the level of suspected child abuse.

## Other Considerations

It is debatable whether first-graders have the psychological sophistication to realize the potential impact of their behavior on the target. Even if the behavior does not meet the criteria of bullying, it is nevertheless completely unacceptable and must be addressed. For more information, refer to the Bullying and Hazing Policy (BUL- 5212.2).

## Emotional Support

### Listen

Listen carefully, pay attention, and convey your concern and interest for his well-being. Ask open-ended questions, as needed, to engage him and help him feel safe. Similarly, speak with the girls to determine why they were rejecting the boy.

### Protect

Intervene immediately. All District employees have a responsibility to ensure a safe learning environment. Cruel and hurtful behavior is not tolerated.

### Connect

Communicate with all students' teacher(s) and parents/ guardians regarding this situation. 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. Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator(s) or event.

### Teach

This would be a good opportunity to discuss bullying and being kind and inclusive of others. Established curricula and/or resources are available through your Discipline Foundation Team.

