



Breaking the Silence Child Abuse Awareness Training

Tough Enough



The Scenario

You enter the gym and find Federico alone and lying on the floor. His arms and legs are severely bruised and his clothing is smeared with shaving cream. He is visibly upset, but asks you not to report the incident. He tells you that this was a test to see if he was tough enough to join the basketball team and that he really wants to be on it.

Discussion Begins

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to Federico? To those on the basketball team? To other students? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Local Law Enforcement Agency or the Department of Children and Family Services 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

If based upon the initial student's statements or observations, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may ask Federico clarifying questions such as, "How did this happen? Who was involved? What else has occurred?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a SCAR must be filed with a CPA.

Other Considerations

If employees, volunteers, adults or community members were aware of any prior incidents or this particular incident, this information must be communicated to the school administrator, as additional actions may be necessary. The school administrator may consult with the Local District (LD) Operations Coordinator to determine next steps. Additionally, the school administrator may refer to the Bullying and Hazing Policy (BUL-5212.2). Staff from the Office of Human Relations, Diversity and Equity may provide consultation.

Emotional Support

Listen

The information reported to you or observed may elicit a strong emotional reaction. Listen carefully, pay attention, and convey your concern and interest in Federico's well-being, thereby helping him to feel safe. You may want to take notes to help 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. Hazing at any age can be exceedingly harmful. Particularly during school years, hazing can be troubling because adolescents tend to be vulnerable to peer pressure coupled with the need for belonging, making friends, and find approval among one's peer group. It is important to take steps to ensure that this behavior has stopped.

Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being. 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. Connecting victims of hazing to the appropriate resources will enhance their ability to recover from this critical event.

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

This is an opportunity to teach students about hazing behaviors and who they may go to for help if this is happening to them. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

There are many misconceptions about hazing, including the idea that hazing is nothing more than harmless pranks and that it is a practiced largely isolated to college fraternities. Studies indicate hazing is common among students in middle and high schools - particularly athletic teams. Hazing is about the abuse of power and violation of human dignity.

