



Breaking the Silence

Child Abuse Awareness Training

A Volunteer's Suspicion



The Scenario

A school-based volunteer tells you that while working with a student, she noticed that his shoulders, neck, and arms were bruised. When she asked the student what happened, he told her that he had fallen down the stairs at his apartment. The volunteer is asking for your guidance. What do you do?

Discussion Begins

As the discussion with the volunteer continues, she mentions that she had noticed bruises on the student a number of times in the past. Does this additional piece of information influence how you handle this situation? What do you do?

Discussion Continues

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to the student? To the volunteer? 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

The student's initial comments may or may not necessitate the filing of a SCAR. However, with subsequent comments, you should have reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred. For any bruise that raises suspicion of child abuse (single or multiple), you must file a SCAR. Due to the visible injuries, you should file the report immediately or ASAP with a CPA.

Other Considerations

Volunteers are not mandated reporters and are not required to file a SCAR. In this situation, the volunteer has correctly reported the information to a mandated reporter.

The law and District policy requires the filing of a SCAR immediately or ASAP. Do not wait until the end of the school day to file a SCAR, as sending the student home may compromise his/her safety.

Emotional Support

Listen

The information reported to you may elicit a strong emotional reaction. It is important to listen to the volunteer and ask clarifying questions. Taking notes might be helpful with remembering the details to be included in the SCAR.

Protect

The situation must be addressed by following the mandated child abuse reporting procedures. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment. Encourage the volunteer to continue being a supportive presence in the student's life.

Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being to certificated staff. 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 to help them achieve balance and restore a calm environment. Do not express shock, anger or disbelief at the possible perpetrator or event.

Teach

Inform the volunteer that by reporting her/his concern, he/she acted in the best interest of the student. Teaching students to seek help and identify who they can go to for support at home and school is important.

