

## Talking with the Child

The first line of communication with the child should always be through a school counselor. When it is necessary to talk with a child in response to a disclosure of maltreatment or to clarify suspicions, it is important to remember to handle the discussion with sensitivity. Your response has the power to calm or upset the child.

### Do:

- \* Find a private place to talk
- \* Reassure the child that he/she is not in trouble
- \* Keep your own feelings under control
- \* Listen
- \* Use open ended questions, "Tell me what happened?"
- \* Use the child's vocabulary
- \* Let the child know what you will do
- \* Support the child

### Do Not:

- \* Press for details beyond what the child is willing to share (You do not need to prove abuse or neglect)
- \* Promise confidentiality
- \* Ask leading or suggestive questions
- \* Make angry or critical comments about the alleged abuser
- \* Disclose information indiscriminately, keeping in mind the child's right to privacy



Under WV Code §49-6A-6 persons making a report in good faith are immune from civil or criminal liability.

To make a report of abuse or neglect  
**Call the WV Child Abuse and Neglect  
Hotline-24/7  
1-800-352-6513**

You may be asked the following questions, which you will need to answer to the best of your ability:

- Demographic information of the victim(s)
- Type of abuse or neglect suspected
- Is the victim in imminent danger?
- Location of the victim and caregivers
- Is there a protective caregiver present?
- Does the alleged perpetrator have access to the victim?
- General functioning of victim and caregivers
- Any safety threats for first responders

# Recognizing and Reporting Child Maltreatment



A Guide for School Employees

## Monongalia County Schools



**WV Senate Bill 465 designates that all school personnel are mandated to report instances of suspected abuse and neglect of children.**

## Making a Difference in a Child's Life

### In the nation (2013)

- 3,188,000 CPS referrals of child maltreatment
- 679,000 child victims
- Over 79.5% of substantiated maltreatment is neglect

### In West Virginia (2013)

- 39,372 CPS investigations or responses
- 4,695 child victims
- 17 child fatalities

Your role as an educator places you in a unique position to build relationships with students and observe changes that are out of character.

### What does it mean to be a mandated reporter?

If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused or observes the child being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in abuse or neglect, must immediately, and within 24 hours, report the matter to BOTH:

1. Child Protective Services (CPS) - WV DHHR via the WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-352-6513
2. **AND** the individual in charge of the school or facility.

In instances where severe physical or sexual abuse is expected, law enforcement is also required to be contacted.

## \*Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

|                                | Physical Indicators  | Behavioral Indicators   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Physical Abuse</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained bruises on face, torso, back, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>• Multiple injuries in various stages of healing</li> <li>• Bruises/welts resembling instrument used e.g. belt, cord</li> <li>• Human bite marks</li> <li>• Injuries regularly appearing after absence, weekend, etc.</li> <li>• Unexplained fractures, lacerations, abrasions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports injury by caretaker</li> <li>• Uncomfortable with physical contact</li> <li>• Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably</li> <li>• Wears clothing inappropriate to weather (to cover body)</li> <li>• Afraid to go home</li> <li>• Chronic runaway (adolescents)</li> <li>• Behavior extremes (withdrawn, aggressive)</li> <li>• Apprehensive when other children cry</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Physical Neglect</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent hunger, poor hygiene</li> <li>• Unattended physical problems or medical needs</li> <li>• Consistent lack of supervision</li> <li>• Abandonment</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports no caretaker at home</li> <li>• Begs, steals food</li> <li>• Frequently absent or tardy</li> <li>• Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class</li> <li>• Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)</li> <li>• Shunned by peers</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Sexual Abuse</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexually transmitted disease (pre-teens)</li> <li>• Pregnancy</li> <li>• Difficulty walking or sitting</li> <li>• Pain or itching in genital area</li> <li>• Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing</li> <li>• Bruises/bleeding in external genitalia</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports sexual abuse</li> <li>• Highly sexualized play</li> <li>• Detailed, age inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior</li> <li>• Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings</li> <li>• Chronic runaway</li> <li>• Excessive seductiveness</li> <li>• Suicide attempts (adolescents)</li> <li>• Deterioration in academic performance</li> <li>• Sudden, noticeable behavior changes</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Mental Abuse or Neglect</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have frequent stomach aches, head aches or unexplained weight fluctuations</li> <li>• May have speech disorders</li> <li>• May lag in physical development</li> <li>• May have a non-organic, failure-to-thrive medical diagnosis</li> <li>• May have learning problems</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits age inappropriate behaviors such as thumb sucking, biting, head banging or rocking</li> <li>• Exhibits extreme behaviors such as over compliance, passivity, aggression, or withdrawal</li> <li>• Exhibits emotional or intellectual developmental delays</li> <li>• Exhibits cruel behavior or may seem to get pleasure from hurting others and/or animals</li> <li>• May abuse alcohol or drugs</li> <li>• May have eating disorders</li> </ul> |

\*A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of maltreatment. Indicators should be considered together with the explanation provided, the child's developmental and physical capabilities, and behavior changes.