

D-202 Health & Safety, Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

The policies of ESD 105 Early Learning program concerning child abuse and neglect are to;

1. Insure the well-being and protection for children enrolled in the program.
2. Promote early recognition and referral of families at risk of child abuse and neglect.
3. Stress prevention of child abuse and neglect through additional opportunities for development of parenting skills, information and referrals regarding community resources.
4. Maintain a cooperative and positive relationship with agencies providing services to families.
5. Inform and educate all staff regarding their legal responsibilities regarding child abuse and neglect reporting.
6. Foster a helpful, supportive attitude by all staff toward any family experiencing abuse and/or neglect issues.
7. Successfully improve outcomes for children at risk: A.) Be culturally aware and sensitive as well as aware of one's own bias. B.) Identify and understand the importance of a child's natural community including family (paternal and maternal), ethnicity, race, and cultural ties.

Reporting Policy

Early learning providers and staff members are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect in accordance with RCW 26.44.030. Any employee who has reasonable cause, without discriminatory or malicious intent, to believe that a child has suffered child abuse or neglect, shall ensure a report is made to Child Protective Services (CPS) (1-866-END-HARM) or to the proper law enforcement agency as provided in RCW 26.44.030.

Within 24 hours of suspecting child abuse or neglect, the staff person will make a verbal report to CPS and the program supervisor. The staff person will complete a written report (Child Abuse Report form or school district report form) within 24 hours of verbal report being made, to be kept on file at the center. Follow-up may be provided by the center supervisor, family support specialist, or other specialist team member.

Employees will cooperate fully with CPS and will not undertake independently to intervene or investigate in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. CPS social workers may interview ECEAP children on the premises of the ECEAP program.

Employees will preserve confidentiality in accordance with state law and the ESD 105 Confidentiality Policy.

Subcontractor Responsibilities

The ESD 105 Early Learning Program Child Abuse and Neglect Policy, Procedures, and parents'/guardians' rights as referenced in RCW Chapter 26.44 will be outlined and distributed at parent orientation meetings or by other means at the start of the school year.

Each employee of an Early Learning subcontractor is governed by the employing agency, center, or school district's child abuse policy and procedures, which must comply with current state laws and regulations.

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Subcontracting agencies that do not have their own policy will follow the ESD 105 Child Abuse and Neglect Policy and Procedures.

Training and Orientation

The employing agency, center, or district center director is responsible for training Early Learning Staff annually, with additional training as updates occur, on reporting procedures.

The information related to staff or volunteer behavior with children, including related policies and procedures, will be provided by the individual's supervisor during new employee orientation and will be discussed during new employee training. Center employees will review this information with volunteers during orientation or one-on-one prior to volunteering.

Prevention

Prevention is a critical part of protecting children. Parent education, safety curriculum and staff training are all components of prevention. The Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) provides information to families and community members on prevention strategies including ***10 Things You Can Do To Prevent Child Abuse:***

- Volunteer your time. Get involved with other parents in your community. Help vulnerable children and their families. Start a playgroup.
- Discipline your children thoughtfully. Never discipline your child when you are upset. Give yourself time to calm down. Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control.
- Examine your behavior. Abuse is not just physical. Both words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Be a nurturing parent. Use your actions to show children and other adults that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.
- Educate yourself and others. Simple support for children and parents can be the best way to prevent child abuse. After-school activities, parent education classes, mentoring programs, and respite care are some of the many ways to keep children safe from harm. Be a voice in support of these efforts in your community.
- Teach children their rights. When children are taught they are special and have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault, and more likely to report an offender.
- Support prevention programs. Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported. Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs - such as family counseling and home visits by nurses who provide assistance for newborns and their parents.
- Know what child abuse is. Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, or the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide a child with needed food,

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clothing, and care. Children can also be emotionally abused when they are rejected, berated, or continuously isolated.

- Know the signs. Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse. Depression, fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of family problems and may indicate a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.
- Report abuse. If you witness a child being harmed or see evidence of abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department or local police. When talking to a child about abuse, listen carefully, assure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling an adult, and affirm that he or she is not responsible for what happened.
- Invest in kids. Encourage leaders in the community to be supportive of children and families. Ask employers to provide family-friendly work environments. Ask your local and national lawmakers to support legislation to better protect our children and to improve their lives.