



Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting and Child Abuse Prevention

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Legal Nuts and Bolts

- All TCA staff are considered *mandatory reporters* (Colorado Revised Statutes § 19-3-304).
- That is, if we **know or suspect** abuse or neglect has occurred, we are required to make a report.
- If a third party gives you information that gives you reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect **is/has** occurred, **you** are the mandated reporter.
- Examples of third parties include a parent, another staff member, another student, etc.

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Straight from the Statute

Colorado Revised Statutes § 19-3-304(1)(a):
 "...a person specified in subsection (2) of this section [which includes **public school officials and employees**] who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect shall **immediately** upon receiving the information **report or cause a report to be made** of the fact as soon as reasonably possible, but **no later than twenty-four hours after receiving the information**, to the county department, the local law enforcement agency, or through the child abuse reporting hotline system . . ."
(Emphasis added.)

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Time Frame Requirements

- Reports must be made within 24 hours.
- School staff members are required to report **any** child abuse or neglect information that is obtained during working hours.
- While mandated reporters don't have to report outside-of-work instances of suspected abuse or neglect, there is nothing preventing them from reporting if they choose.

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Anonymity, Confidentiality, Liability

- **Anonymity:**
 - The people taking the call will take down the information whether or not you disclose your name, however, *you need to provide your name* so there is a record that you made the report and fulfilled mandatory reporting requirements.
- **Confidentiality:**
 - Your name is not disclosed to the family if making a report to DHS. Law enforcement does not have these same confidentiality requirements. Parents have a right to request a copy of the report. DHS tells us they redact identifying information before giving to parents.
- **Liability:**
 - Any person participating in good faith in the making of a report shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, or termination of employment that otherwise might result by reason of such reporting.

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Responding to Abuse and Neglect

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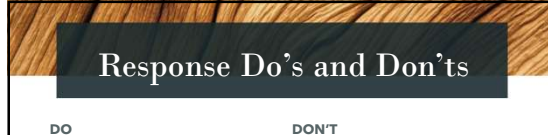
How Kids Generally Report

Directly: Sometimes a kid will tell you clearly what happened or what is happening

Indirectly: Sometimes the child doesn't know they are a victim, or they disclose in a roundabout way. There are clues but no details.

Disguised: Sometimes a kid will "test" an adult's response by telling about someone else they know who is being abuse and/or neglected.

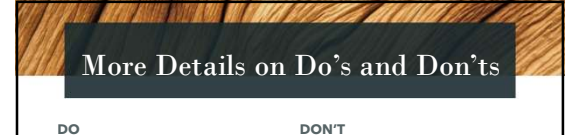
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Response Do's and Don'ts

DO • Listen • Document • Be Supportive • Respect Privacy	DON'T • Deny or make assumptions • Interrogate • Make promises • Interrupt
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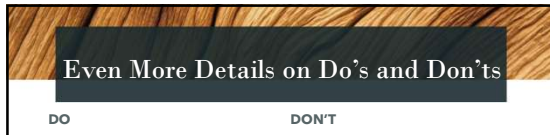
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More Details on Do's and Don'ts

DO Do more listening than talking. It is okay to tell the child things like "that must have been hard for you" or "I'll bet that was scary."	DON'T Sometimes what a child tells us can be hard to believe and it is tempting to deny it. But let the child tell his or her story in their own words. Avoid "filling in" details while the child is disclosing. Our assumptions may be incorrect.
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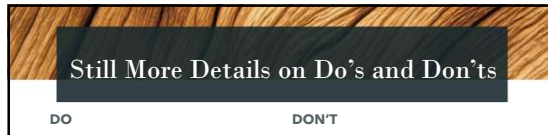
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Even More Details on Do's and Don'ts

DO • Document the conversation with precise language. • You may ask things like: - What happened? - When did it happen? - Where did it happen? - Who did it? - Who else knows? - Who else was there?	DON'T • Don't interrogate by asking a lot of questions, probing for details, or asking leading questions. • Avoid writing down what you think the child meant or summarizing statements.
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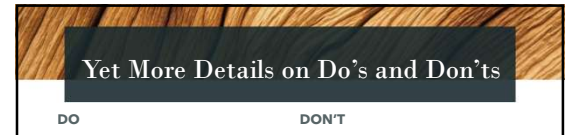
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Still More Details on Do's and Don'ts

DO • Be Supportive: -Reassure the child that you are glad they told you about what is going on in their life. Your top priority is to keep kids safe and what happened is not their fault. -Remain calm, -Avoid making negative statements about the person responsible for the suspected abuse.	DON'T • Don't make promises: -If you don't know what will happen it is okay to say so. -In particular, don't promise that you will keep the disclosure a secret. Instead, tell them the next steps and how you'll support them.
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Yet More Details on Do's and Don'ts

DO • Respect Privacy: -Honor the child's trust and only disclose to people who need to know, -Always let a School Counselor or Administrator know about the child's disclosure and they will guide you on next steps.	DON'T • Don't interrupt. • Avoid having the child "rush" to finish their statement or having them stop mid-story to talk to someone else. They trusted you enough to begin so let them finish.
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Reporting Procedures: What Happens?

- The agency taking the call reviews the referral and makes a determination about what the agency's response will be.
- Sometimes the referral is "screened out," meaning it does not meet criteria for assessment or further action.
- If the case is assigned to a caseworker for assessment they reach out to the family.
- Response times may vary based on the vulnerability of child and/or the nature of concern.

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Recognizing Abuse and Neglect

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Definition of Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental injury as a result of punching, beating, biting, shaking, hitting, stabbing, throwing, burning, or otherwise hurting a child.

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Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries
- Past injuries: fading bruises or other marks, sometimes after breaks
- Fears: Does the child seem frightened? Is the child anxious about going home? Does the child shrink from adults?
- Reports: Is the child reporting about being hurt by someone?
- Animal Abuse: Does the child abuse animals or family pets?

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Emotional Abuse

- Definition: A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth.
- Emotional Abuse could include:
 - Constant criticism
 - Threats
 - Rejection
 - Withholding of love, support, or guidance

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Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Nightmares
- Sudden appetite changes
- Difficulty sitting/walking
- Runs away
- Pregnancy, venereal disease
- Unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Note: some children who experience sexual abuse display these signs and symptoms but these signs/symptoms could be related to other factors and don't conclusively mean that sexual abuse is occurring.

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Definition of Neglect

Failure of a parent, legal guardian, or custodian to provide for a child's basic needs.

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Types of Neglect

- **Emotional:** related to emotional abuse but more on the "withholding" side.
- **Physical:** Failure to provide for basic survival needs.
- **Supervision:** reckless disregard for child's welfare/safety.
- **Education:** refusal to bring to school.

Examples:

- Isolation (denying contact with people outside the home)
- Permitting drug or alcohol use
- Inadequate nurturing
- Exposure to domestic violence

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How to Support the Child

Security - The child needs to feel safe. Do not initiate conversation about abuse with the child.

Structure - Getting back to routine helps things feel normal.

Identity - Reinforce the child's strengths.

Consistency and predictability - Clear expectations and responses.

Sense of belonging - inclusion and involved with other children.

Intimacy in appropriate ways - good eye contact, appropriate boundaries.

Approval - acknowledge the child with warmth.

Enhancement of self concept - child is valued, accepted and capable.

Support for family - respect their need for privacy.

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Child Sexual Abuse and Prevention Plan

- TCA encourages its staff to understand its child sexual abuse and prevention plan and to report any concerning activities to an administrator.
- TCA's training and prevention plan includes has the six areas:
 1. Prevalence and Misconceptions
 2. Understanding Characteristics and Behaviors of Abusers
 3. Grooming Process
 4. Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse
 5. Preventative Methods and Supervision
 6. Responding to Allegations and Supporting Victims

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Understanding Characteristics and Behaviors of Abusers

- Preferential offenders actively seek access to children through child-serving programs.
- Abusers groom both children and gatekeepers (parents, staff, volunteers) by creating trustworthy persona and seeking trusted time alone with children.
- Offenders test and erode children's boundaries through gifts, attention, secret-keeping, and progressively inappropriate behavior.

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Grooming Process

- Grooming involves four steps: gaining access, selecting a child (often one isolated or with unmet needs), introducing rule-breaking, and maintaining victim silence.
- Grooming behaviors for different age groups vary but often include playful touch, gifts, and secrecy.
- Within schools, the highest risk is in less structured activities or unsupervised contexts (bathrooms, changing areas, overnight trips).

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Responding to Allegations and Supporting Victims

- Watch for grooming behaviors.
- Enact and enforce clear boundaries for adult-child and child-child interactions.
- Ramp up supervision, especially in high-risk areas or situations.
- Foster an open communication culture. If you see something, say something.

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Additional Resources

- The Colorado Department of Human Services offers additional training to mandatory reporters at: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect in Colorado - CO4Kids](#).
- The Colorado Office of School Safety offers additional training on: [Trainings on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention | The Office of School Safety](#)

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TCA Mandatory Training: Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting and Child Abuse Prevention

If you have any questions, or need clarification on any of the topics covered here, please contact:

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