



# Child Safety: An Overview for the Education Community

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# Contact Information

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## Abuse and Neglect

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- Caregiver definition
- Signs of Abuse and Neglect
- Speaking with Children

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- Failure to Report
- Agency Protocols
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- Priority Response
- MRS approach
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# What is Abuse and Neglect?

According to TN Law (T.C.A. § 37-1-102), “Abuse” exists when a person under the age of eighteen (18) is **suffering from, has sustained, or may be in immediate danger of suffering from** or sustaining a wound, injury, disability or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian or **caretaker**. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.

# How Does TN Define Caregiver?

- ❑ Any relative or any other person living, visiting or working in the child's home
- ❑ An employee or volunteer at an educational, recreational, medical, religious, therapeutic or other such setting where children are present
- ❑ Any person in any caretaking role with children, such as a babysitter
- ❑ **Anyone** who has allegedly used the child directly or indirectly for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation of a minor, such as a trafficker.

# Signs of Physical Abuse

- ❑ Unexplained fractures or injuries
- ❑ Previous injuries in various healing stages
- ❑ Patterned injuries consistent with objects of abuse (cigarettes, belt, hands)
- ❑ Burns on extremities, buttocks or genitals
- ❑ Frightened of or shrink at approach of adult caregiver
- ❑ Emotional turmoil (anxiety, depressed, suicidal); developmental delays
- ❑ Self-isolation or undue aggression
- ❑ Fear of going home; many school absences
- ❑ Abuses animals or pets

# Signs of Neglect

- Poor growth or weight gain or being overweight
- Poor hygiene
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- Taking food or money without permission
- Hiding food for later
- Poor record of school attendance
- Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental or psychological problems or lack of necessary follow-up care

# Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Social withdrawal or a loss of interest or enthusiasm
- Depression
- Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride the bus
- Desperately seeks affection
- A decrease in school performance or loss of interest in school
- Loss of previously acquired developmental skills



# Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Soreness or bruising, pain or itching in genital or anal areas
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Nightmares or bedwetting
- Unexplained loss of appetite
- Becoming isolated or withdrawn
- Excessive masturbation or sexual play
- Abuses children, animals or pets
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment
- Obsession with pornography or viewing sexually explicit photos
- Repeated runaway or suicide attempts
- Self-destructive behavior/self-injury/cutting, risky or delinquent behavior

# Sexual Behaviors in Children

- ❑ Sexuality is a natural part of childhood development just like language, motor skills, cognitive development.
  
- ❑ Sexual behavior involves “sexual body parts” including
  - ❑ Touching
  - ❑ Looking
  - ❑ Talking
  
- ❑ Some sexual behavior is a healthy, normal part of childhood development, while other behaviors are problematic

# Sexual Behaviors in Children

## Natural

- Between children of similar age, size, and developmental status
- All children agree to the behavior
- Tell sexual jokes or use sexual words
- Exploratory, spontaneous, and occurs in the context of play
- Children have light-hearted feelings before, during, and after the behavior
- Children giggling and engaging in the behavior out in the open
- Self-stimulation to explore genitals and sensations
- Engage in mutual touching with similar aged friends or cousins
- Looks at their own bodies and bodies of others
- Child has made no disclosure

## Concerning

- Child appears unable to stop him/herself
- Behaviors progress in frequency, intensity, or intrusiveness
- Behaviors accompanied by aggression or anger
- Child appears to have too much knowledge of sexuality and behaves in ways consistent with adult sexual behaviors
- Behaviors continue despite consistent, clear requests to stop
- Behaviors interfere with social or family relationships
- They are directed towards adults who feel uncomfortable towards the behaviors

## Problematic

- Behaviors cause physical or emotional pain or discomfort to self or others
- Preoccupation with the behavior
- Sexual behavior geared towards younger children/inappropriate age range
- Planning how to sexually touch others
- Forcing others (physically or through intimidation) to do sexual acts
- Tricking others into sexual acts
- Any penetration
- Trying to have sexual intercourse with another child or adult
- Putting mouths on genitalia
- Manual stimulation, oral, or genital contact with animals
- Unresponsive to redirection
- The behaviors are negatively affecting other children

# Commonly used terms for body parts

- Privates
- Butt
- Front butt
- Pee pee
- Hoo hoo
- Twinkie
- Lollipop
- Winker
- Peter
- Pecker
- Wanker
- Unit
- Kitten
- Pocket book
- Cookie
- Wanker
- Willy
- Pie
- Muffin
- La La
- Tail
- Wiggy
- No No's
- Tootie
- My privacy
- Tee Tees
- No No Square



# What do I say to a child who discloses abuse?

- Thank them for their bravery
- Assure them they did the right thing for telling someone
- Let them know that you believe them
- Let them know what happened is not their fault
- Tell them that you'll need to talk to someone whose job it is to keep them safe
- Tell them you are here to support them

**Note: Your response can have a big impact on their ability to seek further help and recover from the trauma.**

# During a disclosure, it's important to avoid:

- ❑ Filling in the story – by giving them words or asking leading questions like “Did mom or dad hit you?” or “Do they make you afraid”?
- ❑ Asking too many questions – leave the investigating and fact finding to trained professionals ★
- ❑ Expressing anger about the alleged abuser – they may be an adult the child loves and cares for
- ❑ Confronting the alleged abuser – it could make things worse or unsafe for the child
- ❑ Making promises you can't keep – such as promising you will not tell anyone
- ❑ Pressuring the child for information – or for details beyond what they want to say
- ❑ Questions that infer blame – like “Did you try to stop them?” or “Did you scream or call out for help?”

# Why do some children not disclose their abuse?

- ❑ Threats have been made by their abuser
- ❑ They are afraid of the consequences that could come with disclosing
- ❑ There is a lack of opportunity (no one has ever asked!)
- ❑ There is a lack of understanding that they are being abused
- ❑ Despite the abuse, they have a relationship with and even love their abuser. Many children love their abuser but hate the abuse.

# Mandated Reporter T.C.A. 37-1-403 (a) (1)

“Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.”



# T.C.A. 37-1-403(h)

- ❑ Employees do have the right to make a report without having to report that information to their organization.
- ❑ Organizations can develop internal procedures to track, report, and monitor reports of child abuse and neglect made by their staff.

***However, it is against the law for anyone to impede or prevent a report from being made!***

# T.C.A.37-1-605(d) (1)

If a school teacher, school official, or any other school personnel has knowledge of reasonable cause to suspect that a child who attends such school may be a victim of child abuse or child sexual abuse sufficient to require reporting pursuant to this section and that such abuse occurred on school grounds or while the child was under the care of the school, **then the principal or other person designated shall verbally notify the parent or legal guardian** of such child that a report pursuant to this information has been made and shall provide other information relevant to the future well being of the child while under supervision or care of the school.

# T.C.A.37-1-605(d) (1)

Such verbal notice shall be made in coordination with the Department of Children's Services to the parent or legal guardian **within twenty-four (24) hours** from the time the school, school teacher, school official, or other school personnel reports such abuse to the Department of Children's Services, judge, or law enforcement; provided that in no event may the notice be later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time such report was made. **Such notice shall not be sent to any parent or legal guardian if there is reasonable cause to believe that such parent or legal guardian may be the perpetrator or in any way responsible for the child abuse or child sexual abuse.**

# Who Should Make the Report?

- ❑ If a child tells his school teacher that someone has abused him, that teacher should make the report.
- ❑ If a child tells her friend she is being sexually abused and that friend tells the bus driver, the bus driver should make the report.
- ❑ If the principal witnesses a child being abused in the car pick up line, the principal should make the report.
- ❑ If the teacher observes signs of abuse or neglect, the teacher should make the report.

# Should A Report Be Called In?

- A 7 year old child disclosed that their aunt had sexually assaulted her last weekend. The child was forced to perform oral sex on her aunt. The child said that the aunt went back home to California yesterday. The aunt does not have current access to the child.

# Referent Rights

- ❑ Referents have the right to make a report anonymously per state law;
- ❑ Their personal information may remain confidential and is protected by state law;
- ❑ They have freedom from civil and criminal liability for reports of suspected abuse and neglect made in good faith;
- ❑ They have freedom from detrimental change in employment status for reports of suspected child abuse and neglect made in good faith;
- ❑ The reporter may be notified by mail, email, or web tracking system whether the case was screened out or assigned.

# What if I am just concerned?

- ❑ You do not have to have proof that child abuse/neglect has occurred in order to report.
- ❑ The law speaks to making reports based on “available information” and in a situation that “reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.”

# Failure to Report T.C.A. 37-1-413

- ❑ Failure to report is a Class A misdemeanor.
- ❑ Fine for “failure to report” is not to exceed \$2,500



# Making a referral to DCS



- ❑ The Child Abuse Hotline Public line
  - ❑ **1-877-237-0004**
- ❑ The Child Abuse Hotline has a number specifically for school staff to report abuse/neglect so that your call will be answered quicker than calls from the general public. The number is **855-209-4226**.
- ❑ When making a referral, it is important to call the Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible, as opposed to waiting until the end of the school day.

# Child Abuse Referral and Tracking Site

TN

## Child Abuse Referral And Tracking

### Child Abuse Referral And Tracking

#### Referrals

Do you need to report the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or children?

Please follow the link below to report suspicions of abuse/neglect of children when the suspected abuse/neglect took place in Tennessee. [TCA 37-1-403](#) and [TCA 37-1-605](#) law requires all persons to make a report when they suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation of children.

[Report Abuse or Neglect](#)

#### Tracking

Did you previously submit a referral and want to know the status?

If you have the **Referral ID**, you can search the referral and find out the status.

[Track a Referral](#)

[apps.tn.gov/carat/](https://apps.tn.gov/carat/)

TN

Department of  
**Children's Services**

# MyTN app



Do you need to report the abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or children? Or Did you previously submit a referral and want to know the status?

VIEW SITE

TN

A.TN.GOV Service

## Child Abuse Referral And Tracking

### Child Abuse Referral And Tracking Referrals

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Report Abuse or Neglect

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# Information to have on hand



- ❑ The following information on the child(ren) and their household members/caretakers:
  - ❑ Name
  - ❑ DOB or estimated ages
  - ❑ Relations to one another
  - ❑ Address or directions
  - ❑ Phone or other contact information
  
- ❑ Does the child or anyone else have any special needs/disabilities? Do they have an IEP?
  - ❑ This information could impact the level of risk to the child.
  
- ❑ Your school's hours of operation and if there are breaks approaching (Christmas break, summer vacation, etc.)

# Allegation Specific Questions Asked

- Physical Abuse
- Drug Exposed Child
- Environmental Neglect
- Nutritional Neglect
- Medical Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Lack of Supervision
- Abandonment
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Psychological Harm
- Abuse or Neglect Death



# Reporting Educational Neglect

- ❑ School staff will want to inform the Child Abuse Hotline where they are in their Truancy Intervention plan.
- ❑ DCS is unable to assign an allegation of educational neglect unless the school has demonstrated attempts to correct the situation under the Three Tier Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan (Attendance Policy 6200).



# Reporting Suspected Physical Abuse/Injuries

When reporting any physical injuries, it is helpful to provide a detailed description of the injuries, including:

- Size
- Shape
- Location
- Color
- Pattern

It is also helpful to provide the following information:

- You will also want to provide Is the child reported to be in pain?
- Does the child need or have received medical attention?
- What did the child say about how the injury was caused?
- Do you feel the injuries match the story given?

# Reporting on a child with suicidal ideations

If you are contacting the Child Abuse Hotline regarding a child with suicidal ideations or self-harm, some of the things you may be asked are:

- Has the child made a threat of suicide? Already self-harmed?
- Did the child say why they are contemplating suicide?
- Does the child currently have a plan? What is the plan?
- Has the child attempted suicide previously? How many times? When was the last time? What happened?
- Does the child have access to means (guns, knives, prescriptions meds, drugs)?
- Are the parents/caretakers aware of the child's suicidal ideations? Are they protective and supportive?
- Have the parents attempted to find resources to help the child? What are they?
- Does the child need medical attention?
- Is there a safety plan in place? Are the parents abiding by the safety plan?
- Has Mobile Crisis been contacted? Are they responding?
- Does the child have a mental health diagnosis?
- Where is the child now?



# Reporting Suspected Sexual Abuse Concerns

- ❑ The child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator.
- ❑ Sexual behaviors or situations in which the motivation may or may not be sexual, but there is a clear sexual component.
- ❑ The use of any person under the age of eighteen (18) as defined above in exchange for anything of value either directly or indirectly. Force, threat or coercion is not a factor for Sex Trafficking
- ❑ Child is under 18 and Sex Trafficking
- ❑ Child is 12 and under
- ❑ Child is 13 -17 and the perpetrator is one of the following:
  - ❑ A parent, caretaker, or relative (regardless of where the relative lives)
  - ❑ A person living in the home
  - ❑ An educator or employee/volunteer of a school, recreational or organizational setting who is responsible for the alleged victim.
  - ❑ An individual providing treatment, care, or supervision for the child
  - ❑ If the reporter is unsure about the identity and relationship of an alleged perpetrator

# DCS Priority Response

## Priority 3

### Three Business Days

Reports that indicate a low risk of harm.

## Priority 2

### Two Business Days

Injuries or risk of injuries that are not life threatening and do not require immediate medical care.

## Priority 1

### Twenty Four Hours

- Reports that indicate imminent threat of serious harm or death


# Why are some reports not assigned?

- ❑ The information provided does not meet a definition of abuse/neglect as dictated by TN state law.
- ❑ The family already has an open case with the department and your concerns are to be addressed in the current open case.
- ❑ There is no locating information for the family.
- ❑ The information reported has already been investigated by the department in a previous case.
- ❑ With sex abuse allegations, the alleged child victim is over the age of 13 and the alleged perpetrator is not a parent, relative, caregiver, or household member. This will be sent to law enforcement.
- ❑ The alleged child victim does not reside in the state of TN and will not return to the state of TN in a timeframe that the case could be investigated and concluded.
- ❑ The alleged child victim is over the age of 18 who considered an adult in TN and not in DCS Custody.
- ❑ Involves alleged physical abuse or neglect by a perpetrator who is not a relative or caregiver and has been referred to the local law enforcement agency as appropriate

# Investigation of Sexual Abuse

- ❑ Per TCA 37-1-406(b), **Sexual Abuse allegations against children must be investigated by a team of professionals called the Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT)**. This team consists of CPS staff, local Law Enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Court, and the director of the local Child Advocacy Center.
- ❑ Each partner has a different role, but the purpose of this team approach is to minimize additional trauma to the child victim(s).

# So, what do we do instead?



The best possible way for the child welfare system to minimize further trauma to a child who may have been sexually abused is by having the child participate in a Forensic Interview.

# Forensic Interview

A Forensic Interview is a structured conversation with a child that is intended to elicit detailed information about a possible event that the child may have experienced or witnessed.

- ❑ Completed in a neutral, child-friendly setting – almost always at the local Child Advocacy Center
- ❑ Objective, non-leading, developmentally sensitive
- ❑ Forensic Interviewer is specially trained and skilled at talking with children
- ❑ Interview is legally defensible – it will stand up in court if the investigation leads to criminal prosecution
- ❑ Interviews are video recorded and remotely observed by the Law Enforcement and CPS investigators

# Minimal Facts Interview

- ❑ May be conducted at school by CPS staff
- ❑ Usually a **brief** interview with a child regarding the allegations of abuse
- ❑ **Only** done when required and in consultation with CPIT partners
- ❑ The goal: minimal questioning to yield information necessary for immediate protection
- ❑ Designed to be a SAFETY INTERVIEW
- ❑ Will assess for the need to seek immediate medical care
- ❑ May not be done at all if the CPS investigator can obtain the needed information from other sources

# DCS Response

- ❑ Child welfare is not a one-size fits-all approach. That's why DCS uses the multiple response system to child maltreatment.
- ❑ Different situations require different responses. DCS has a variety of ways of looking into and responding to allegations. They look at the severity of the alleged maltreatment, and take into account a family's needs. Using the Multiple Response System, child protective services case managers offer a variety of approaches that can be more helpful to families and promise more lasting change.



# When DCS Responds to the School



If at all possible, DCS staff will work with the school to allow minimal disruption to the child's classroom instruction and/or testing.

# Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-406 (c)

- ❑ All private schools, church-related schools, and state, county and local schools shall give DCS staff, and Law Enforcement if applicable, access to records in their custody pertaining to the child and shall otherwise cooperate fully with the investigation.

# What Information Can DCS Share?

- ❑ Information pertaining to the safety of the child
  - ❑ If a child is placed outside of their home for safety reasons, the school will be provided with that information.

# Special Investigation Unit

- ❑ Conducts investigations on allegations of child abuse and neglect which occur while a child is in DCS custody or when the case involves non-custodial children where the alleged perpetrator (AP) is acting in an official employment, volunteer, or foster care capacity.
- ❑ The SIU conducts investigations where the allegations would affect the employment or volunteer status of those working with children.
- ❑ When a case involves school personnel, SIU staff immediately notifies the Superintendent or designee assigned to the school district where the allegation occurred.

# Questions?



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