

# *Recognize. Respond. Report*

Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-855-323-DCFS (3237)

## *Are you a mandatory reporter?*

Yes, as a CASA it is your responsibility to identify and report situations in which you believe child abuse or neglect may be occurring. Mandatory reporting is required based on the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA). [www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/about/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/about/)

## *Why is your role important?*

You are in a position to help children. Children have a chance to recover and with appropriate intervention can become a productive adult.

### **Facts:**

Child neglect occurs more frequently than child abuse. • A child is most likely to be abused or neglected by a parent. • Abuse can be in the form of Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Institutional. • Mandatory reporters do not determine abuse, they report suspicions they may have. • Unlike other forms of abuse, physical evidence is rare in sexual abuse cases. • You don't need to see physical evidence to suspect and report sexual abuse.

### **Definitions:**

**Physical Abuse:** A non-accidental physical injury (minor bruises to severe fractures or death), as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver or other person who has responsibility for the child. (Considered abuse whether the intention was to hurt the child or not.)

**Sexual Abuse:** Includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

**Emotional Abuse:** A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self worth.

**Institutional Abuse:** Abuse occurs when any employee of any institution responsible for caring for the health, safety, or well-being of a child or youth causes a child or youth to be harmed or fails to protect a child or youth from harm.

**Disclosure:** Something a child says, directly or indirectly, may tell you that abuse or neglect is occurring.

# Three things to know...

## *What to Recognize*

**Signs of Abuse/Neglect:** Unexplained injuries, burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes • shows fear toward the parent • fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school • Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home • Shrinks at the approach of adults • Has told you they have been hurt • Abuses animals or family pets • Parent/child rarely touch or look at each other • Parent/child consider their relationship entirely negative • Say they do not like each other • Parent shows little concern for the child • Parent sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome • Parent denies the existence of the child • Parent blames the child for problems at home/school • Parent uses harsh physical discipline • Parent describes the child as evil or in a negative way • Parent gives conflicting or no explanation for the child's injuries • Is frequently absent from school • Begs or steals food or money • Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses • Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor • Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather • States that there is no one at home to provide care • Reports nightmares or bedwetting • Experiences a sudden change in appetite • Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior • Suddenly refuses to change for gym

## *How to Respond*

Children disclose abuse/neglect in one of these ways: **Indirectly** - A child may tell you about the abuse in a round-about way, for example, "My step-dad keeps me up at night." • **In disguise** - A child may test your reaction by connecting the abuse to someone else or generalize, for example, "I have a cousin whose mom hits her." • **Directly** - A child will tell you what happened. **Respond:** In a caring, non-judgmental way, let them know they did the right thing coming to you, listen and support the child. Do Not Deny, Assume, Interrogate, Make Promises, Interrupt, Threaten, Bargain, Abandon or Conduct your own assessment.

**What a child wants you to know:** Use words I understand. Don't promise you'll keep this a secret if you won't. I talked to you because I trust you. Talking about what happened is hard, it makes me feel ashamed. Tell me you care about me and let me know that what I've told you doesn't change that. Help me understand what will happen next. Tell me what you'll do to keep me safe. I need to trust you. I tried to tell someone else once, but I changed my mind because of how they reacted. Tell me I'm brave. Tell me it took a lot of courage to let you know what happened. Don't act shocked and don't cry. I need you to hear me. If I have a question and you don't know the answer, don't just make stuff up, just tell me you'll find out. Then go find out. Do what you said you'd do.

## *Why, When and How to Report*

**Why report?** When you make a report, you set in motion a series of events that can protect the child, prevent further harm to that child or their siblings, and promote positive change in a family. The law requires you to make a report.

**When to report?** When you suspect abuse or neglect.

**How to report?** Make the call. You can call 9-1-1 or the Utah Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-855-323-DCFS (3237). Telling your supervisor doesn't change your responsibility to make the call. Don't worry if you don't have all the answers. Just answer honestly about what you know and acknowledge what you're not sure about. In order to document that you've fulfilled your responsibility as a mandatory report, you must give your name. It's a good idea to get the name of the person who took your call and keep it for your records.

Most important part of your job is reporting child abuse and neglect.