Local Department of Social Services
Response

After a report is made, a child protective services (CPS) worker will interview the child and siblings. The interview may occur at school. Parental consent to interview at school is not necessary pursuant to Section 63.2-1518 of the Code of Virginia.

The CPS worker will also interview the parents or caretakers, the alleged abuser and other persons having information about the suspected abuse or neglect.

The CPS worker will conduct a child safety assessment; determine if child abuse or neglect occurred or if there is risk of harm; and develop a safety and services plan with the family when indicated.

The primary goal of child protective services is to strengthen and support families in preventing the (re)occurrence of child maltreatment through community-based services.

Talking with the Child

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

School employees reporting in good faith are immune from civil and criminal liability pursuant to Section 63.2-1512 of the Code of Virginia.

Additional Information

For additional information, prevention materials, and/or in-service training, contact your local social services department or the Virginia Department of Social Services at www.dss.virginia.gov

Virginia Department of Social Services
801 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
www.dss.virginia.gov

Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-552-7096
Language Interpretive Services Available

Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Virginia
A Guide for School Employees
Making a Difference in a Child’s Life

Each year in Virginia, approximately 50,000 children are reported to local social services departments for suspected child abuse or neglect. Many of these children attend public and private schools.

Abuse and neglect of children occurs within families and in other settings where children are provided care or services. These settings include schools, residential facilities, day care centers/homes, and recreational or sporting programs.

As a school employee who has daily contact with students, you are in a key position to recognize indicators of child maltreatment and request help and services for the child and his/her family.

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child’s care:

1. Causes or threatens to cause a nonaccidental physical or mental injury.
2. Causes or threatens to cause a nonaccidental physical or mental injury during the manufacture or sale of certain drugs.
3. Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care.
4. Abandons the child.
5. Fails to provide adequate supervision in relation to the child’s age and level of development.

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