

*Child abuse reporting  
and the  
School Volunteer*

*Procedures and Protocol  
2013-2014*



# MANDATED REPORTERS

Section 19-7-5 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,

Relating to the reporting of child abuse, designated several categories of individuals as mandated reporters, who “having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made.”

All child service organization personnel are mandated reporters. **That includes Volunteers**



## Child service organization personnel

means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.

O.C.G.A. 19-7-5(b)(5)



# PHYSICAL ABUSE

The non-accidental physical injury of a child. Physical abuse is the most visible and widely recognized form of child abuse.

## Indicators

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has 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
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

**In Georgia, Corporal Punishment is legal. Abuse is not.**



# NEGLECT

The failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs.

- The failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs, including safety from harm or danger (failure to protect).
- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision this also includes the failure to protect a child from harm/danger.)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- Educational (e.g. failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs)

## Indicators

- 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
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care



# Sexual Abuse

The exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child. Sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by an individual known to the victim, rarely is the offender a stranger. One-third of all sexual abuse is perpetrated by another child.

Sexual abuse includes touching offenses: fondling, sodomy, rape; and non-touching offenses: child prostitution, indecent exposure and exhibitionism, utilizing the internet as a vehicle for exploitation

## Indicators

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted disease
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver



# Emotional Abuse

A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth.

It frequently occurs as verbal abuse, but can also include the following: rejection, terrorizing, shameful forms of punishment, withholding physical and emotional contact; developmentally inappropriate expectations.



## Indicators

Many of the indicators of abuse are common to multiple categories of abuse.

running away, school problems, aggression, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, excessive worries, substance abuse, self injury, and suicidal thoughts or actions could be a response to any type of abuse.



# Suicide

If the child you are concerned about has attempted suicide in the past or your concern is about the danger that the child represents to him or herself, you may want to contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to learn more. Some of the warning signs that someone is at high risk include:

## Indicators

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having a reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings





# DISCLOSURES

When a child tells you that he or she has been abused, i.e. makes a disclosure, you should always take the statement seriously, regardless of how credible the child's statement seems.

## What to do When a Child Discloses

- Find a private place to talk with the child
- Reassure the child "I believe you." "I am glad you told me." "It is not your fault this happened." "(Sexual) abuse is wrong."
- Listen openly and calmly. Try to keep your own emotions and nonverbal cues neutral. Don't comment on the child's situation as being "good" or "bad." Let the child tell his or her own story.
- Write down the facts and words as the child has stated them. Leave out your own assumptions and value judgments.
- Report the disclosure to the designated reporter in your school/ system/agency or your local child protection agency or law enforcement entity.

**Respect the child's need for confidentiality... ..by not discussing the abuse with anyone other than those required by school/agency policy and the law.**



# MAKING A REPORT

In Georgia, you may fulfill the mandate by reporting to a designated reporter. See one of the following school personnel:

## Counselor/Administrator/or School Resource Officer

- However, there may be situations when you feel more comfortable making a report directly to DFCS.
- During regular business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), you should call the DFCS office in the county in which the child lives. You can look that up online at <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/complete-list-all-county-offices> or contact Georgia's Child Protective Services office at (404) 657-3400.
- Between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m., Monday through Friday and on weekends, holidays, and furlough days, you can call 1-855-GA CHILD (1-855-422-4453). This number is staffed 24 hours a day.



## **You are responsible!**

An oral report and written faxed report must be made within 24 hours by telephone or in person to the DFCS office providing protective services in the county in which the child lives.

Failure to report within 24 hours is a misdemeanor with up to \$1000 fine.

The best practice is to report right away.

Your name is confidential to DEFACS and the mandated reporters.

**LOOK OUT FOR OUR KIDS**

