

Child Abuse Reporting

Head Start Performance Standards

§ 1302.47 (b) (5) (i)

Policy

All Community Action Head Start staff members are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of every child served by the Community Action Organization. Oregon law and Head Start Program Performance Standards require that all Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) staff are mandatory reporters and must comply with Federal and State laws regarding child abuse reporting.

The Family Services Supervisor is the designated staff person to oversee child abuse reports. The Family Services Supervisor will establish and maintain a cooperative relationship with the child protective services agency in the community, develop policy and assist with reporting procedures as needed; maintain accurate and confidential records of HS/EHS actions; and oversee parent education on child abuse prevention.

Oregon Revised Statute 419B.010 Duty of officials to report child abuse; exceptions; penalty. (1) Any public or private official having reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom the official comes in contact has suffered abuse or that any person with whom the official comes in contact has abused a child shall immediately report or cause a report to be made in the manner required in ORS 419B.015. When a mandatory report is not required, a voluntary report is encouraged. A voluntary report is one that is not mandated because there was no direct contact.

Procedure

If a staff member or classroom volunteer observes any of the following physical and behavioral indicators or suspects abuse, they are *required* to call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) to make a report immediately. It is not appropriate to notify the alleged offender or perpetrator as this could compromise a CPS or law enforcement investigation.

Physical and Behavioral Indicators:

- Visible evidence of physical injury which may have been caused by abuse.
- Evidence of neglect endangering the child's health or safety.
- Behavioral evidence of sexual abuse or exploitation.
- Verbal disclosure by a child of abuse or neglect.
- Disclosure made by a child indicating exposure to domestic violence, even when the child was not present and/or physically hurt.

There are other circumstances when staff may have to use the best judgment when determining whether a report is required. When a parent/guardian discloses to staff they are an adult survivor of domestic violence, **staff will provide appropriate resources. In addition, make an immediate report to the Child Abuse Hotline if there is a risk of severe harm or suspect threat of harm to a child. There are multiple pathways to harm, and it can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, etc. If the staff member needs help locating the appropriate resources, contact the Family Services Teacher.**

**Community Action Head Start
Washington County, Oregon**

Involving Parent/Guardians in Reporting

In an effort to preserve the relationship or develop a trusting relationship with the parent/guardian, the staff member has the option to inform and involve the parent in the reporting process **when the parent/guardian discloses abuse**. It is highly recommended to staff to consider the option to engage parent/guardian in the reporting process when appropriate. It can be a good opportunity to develop a stronger relationship and to build a trusting and supportive relationship. Staff who are unsure if they should involve the parent in the reporting process or need coaching on how to have conversations to involve parent/guardian in the reporting process will reach out to their Supervisor, the Family Services Supervisor, Early Childhood Program Managers immediately, as long as it does not delay the report. There are many factors to consider when involving parents/guardians in the reporting process. There are situations where it is not appropriate to involve parents/guardians in the reporting process - when a child discloses abuse, when there is suspicion of abuse or concerns about parent/guardian, family, child or staff safety.

Head Start staff will ensure they complete the **Child Abuse Form** each time a call to the hotline is made:

- Document the screeners name and the screening report ID number.
- Complete the form **at the time** of the call to the hotline.
- Send a copy of the Child Abuse Form to the Family Services Supervisor within one working day via courier or email. The other copy is to remain in a locked file cabinet in a separate folder, kept on site for licensing for two years. Reference the Recordkeeping section for additional information.
- Report suspected abuse *before the child leaves* your supervision if possible. Call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) at 1-855-503-SAFE (7233) and explain your concern. Utilize the "[Child Abuse Reporting Guide](#)" to prepare for the questions you will be asked. The ORCAH accepts reports 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **When the child is at risk of immediate danger, call 911 first and then the Call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline.**
- If there is an allegation of abuse, the report will be assigned to a child protective services (CPS) caseworker who may contact you prior to having contact with the child or family. If the caseworker comes to the center to interview the child and if class time is over by the time they arrive, the child is to go home as usual. The CPS worker will go to the child's home to conduct the interview. The CPS worker may follow up after a child abuse report. They may phone or visit the site. Staff are authorized to provide additional information regarding the child or the reported incident.
- Confirm, as soon as possible, with your direct supervisor that the report was made and when CPS visits your classroom.
- Email or call the Family Services Supervisor informing of the call to the hotline **within 24 hours**. If you send an email message, maintain confidentiality. Because email messages are not considered confidential, do not describe the incident in detail. Include only child's CPID in the subject line and the information that a report has been made. Do not include the details of the incident leading up to the report. Whenever possible use your CAO email account to send the message.

Head Start staff members are *not* to perform non-emergency intrusive physical examinations on children. This includes any exam that is not immediately necessary to protect the health and safety of the child and/or involves the exposure of private body parts. It is not our job to investigate possible child abuse: we are only responsible for reporting it.

**Community Action Head Start
Washington County, Oregon**

Reporting Staff Members as Alleged Perpetrators of Child Abuse

- Immediately take all appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child, **including removing the child** from the presence of the staff member.
- When the child is safe, *make an emergency call* to your direct supervisor to inform them of the incident and follow their instructions. If you do not reach your supervisor, leave a message for them to contact you immediately and call the following individuals in this order *until you are able to speak with someone* to report the incident: Early Childhood Program Manager(s), Operations Manager and Director of Head Start. All witnesses to the incident must complete a Child Abuse report.
- Immediately make a report to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline.
- As soon as a report of child abuse by a staff member is received by a member of program management, they will contact the staff member immediately to place the staff member on administrative leave with pay pending the results of an internal investigation into their conduct.
- The Director of Head Start and appropriate Early Childhood Program Manager(s) will determine how and when to inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the affected child and will inform Human Resources of the incident as soon as possible. Program management will ensure all appropriate internal procedures are followed as well as to ensure mandatory reporting to ORCAH is complete.

Public School Sites

When the Head Start classroom is in a public school, procedures for reporting abuse remain the same. If staff are expecting a CPS worker to come to the classroom because of the report made, staff may inform the administrative staff in the school's main office that a worker is expected to arrive. **Do not** give the school staff identifying information about the family involved unless you suspect the parents/guardians of the child(ren) will come to the school during or after the investigation and may become confrontational or threatening to staff or the children.

Often the Head Start child has siblings in other classes at the school. **Prior** to any conversation with public school staff involved with the family, the Family Services Supervisor will be consulted and may approve a Coordinated Care Meeting with the siblings' elementary teacher to discuss concerns regarding the family, if appropriate. It is **not a violation of confidentiality** to share information with school staff, but you **must limit** the exchange of information to specific concerns with the purpose of working together as mandated reporters. Head Start staff will take meeting notes and maintain them as part of the confidential Child Abuse file at the center.

Debriefing an Incident

Reporting incidents is often a difficult and emotional event. Staff are encouraged to hold a debriefing session within 24 hours of making a report. Call the Family Services Supervisor, the Disabilities and Mental Health Supervisor and/or staff's direct supervisor to request a debriefing meeting whenever necessary. When requested, the direct supervisor, the Family Services Supervisor, and/or the Disabilities and Mental Health Supervisor, will participate in debriefing meetings as soon as possible. Staff may also contact the Employee Assistance Program if they would like to debrief with a mental health professional. The purpose of debriefing is:

- To give team members the opportunity to review their reason(s) for making the report.
- To offer and receive support.
- To identify concerns about the reporting process and give feedback to the Family Services Supervisor.
- To determine if a Coordinated Care Meeting needs to take place with public school staff, Content Area Coordinators, the Mental Health Consultant, or others. The intent of the Coordinated Care Meeting is to determine future support to the family.

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Recordkeeping

- All incidents and reports of child abuse must be recorded in the Community Action Head Start records. The Family Services Supervisor reviews all Child Abuse Reports and maintains the official copies in a locked file drawer for two years.
- Every Community Action Head Start site maintains a confidential Child Abuse file in a locked file drawer. The classrooms located at BCDC and school district locations should send the confidential Child Abuse files to the Family Services Supervisor at the end of each program year. All other sites should maintain these for two years.