Who’s There to Protect the Child

Supporting Mandated Reporters of Suspected Child Abuse

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Interpretative Summary

During this session, participants will learn about discuss, and develop strategies to ensure consistent, confidential, and effective reporting of suspected child abuse. Participants will also learn how to plan and implement local reporting policies and procedures, overcome obstacles to reporting, and devise strategies to support mandated reporters.
Overview and Outcomes

- **Review** types of child abuse
- **Confirm** who are mandated reporters
- **Understand** categories of mandated reporters
- **Know** reasons for reporting suspected child abuse
- **Explore** why mandated reporters fail to report suspected child abuse
- **Identify** and discuss typical Concerns through guided role play and anecdotal cases
Types of Child Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Physical Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Maltreatment
Types of Abuse Defined

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
  Non-accidental physical injury

- **PHYSICAL NEGLECT**
  Severe Malnutrition
  Health and Safety of child put at risk

- **SEXUAL ABUSE**
  Sexual assault or exploitation of minors
  Chronic molestation or single incident
  Exploitation related to pornography

- **EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT**
  Verbal assaults, belittling
  Constant family discord
Physical Indicators of Abuse

Physical Abuse
- Burns (cigarette, rope, scalding water)
- Fractures, lacerations, bruises that cannot be explained
- Facial injuries (black eyes, broken jaw)
- Pattern of bruising (different stages of discoloration)

Neglect
- Failure to thrive
- Malnutrition
- Inappropriate dress for weather
- Dirty, unkempt
- Unattended medical conditions

Sexual Abuse
- Bruising around genital area
- Swelling or discharge from vagina or penis
- Visible lesions around mouth or genitals
- Painful urination, defecation
Behavioral Indicators of Abuse

**Physical Abuse**
- Hostile or aggressive behavior towards others
- Extreme fear or withdrawn behavior
- Self destructive behavior / Verbally abusive

**Neglect**
- Clingy or indiscriminate attachment
- Isolates self
- Seems depressed or passive

**Sexual Abuse**
- Sexualized behavior (knowledge of explicit sexual behavior)
- Self destructive
- Eating disorders
- Promiscuous behavior

**Emotional Abuse**
- Lacks self-esteem; puts self down constantly
Emotional Maltreatment

- **Psychological Abuse:**
  Rejecting, degrading, terrorizing, isolating, corrupting, exploiting. Denying essential stimulation, emotional responsiveness, or availability, and inconsistent parenting.

- **Emotional Neglect:**
  Often the result of parental ignorance, wherein, the parent may provide an adequate physical environment, but no encouragement, emotional support, and/or may ignoring the child.

- **Witnesses to Violence:**
  80% of homicides in this country are a result of family violence
Other Symptoms of Abuse

• **FEAR:** as may be seen by frequent nightmares, inability to sleep, or more than usual reluctance to work with new people or try new things

• **ANXIETY:** as may be noted by overreactions to loud noises or startling events

• **DEPRESSION:** as may be revealed as lack of interest in activities and games

• **DISSOCIATION:** which may be seen as more than usual day dreaming or the child appearing “spaced out” fairly frequently.

• **ANGER and HOSTILITY:** as may be displayed at any given time as an unwarranted outburst or over-resistance to a classroom activity
Child Maltreatment*

- 740,517 Substantiated Cases of Maltreatment

Maltreatment by Types:
- Physical Abuse: 79,866 (10.8%)
- Neglect: 436,944 (59%)
- Medical Neglect: 6,759 (.9%)
- Sexual Abuse: 56,460 (7.6%)
- Psychological Maltreatment: 31,366 (4.2%)
- Multiple Maltreatments: 97,123 (13.1%)
- Other: 31,207 (4.2%)

*Data from Child Maltreatment ©2007
Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Maltreatment Fatalities by Age*

- 1,280 Maltreatment Fatalities

Maltreatment Fatalities by Age:

- < 1 Year Old: 540 (42.2%)
- 1 Year Old: 211 (16.5%)
- 2 Years Old: 137 (10.7%)
- 3 Years Old: 80 (06.3%)
- 4-7 Years Old: 165 (12.9%)
- 8-11 Years Old: 60 (04.7%)
- 12-15 Years Old: 57 (04.5%)
- 16-17 Years Old: 26 (02.0%)

88.9%

*Data from Child Maltreatment ©2007
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Who are Mandated Reporters?

- Child care custodians
- Health practitioners
- Employees of a child protective agency
- Commercial film and photographic print processors
Child Care Custodians

- Employee of a Licensed Child Care
- Group home personnel
- Instructional Assistant
- Licensing Worker
- Teacher
- Principal
Who Reported*

57.4% of Reports Received from Professionals

• **Suspected Maltreatment Reports by Source**
  – Educational Personnel: 310,837 (17%)
  – Child Daycare Providers: 16,305 (.9%)
  – Social Service Personnel: 185,646 (10.1%)
  – Medical Personnel: 152,520 (8.3%)
  – Mental Health Personnel: 78,386 (4.3%)
  – Legal/Law Enforcement: 295,960 (16.2%)

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Victims: 9,807 (0.8%)

*Data from *Child Maltreatment ©2007
Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Categories of Mandated Reporters

- **Consistent Reporters**, who always reported
- **Discretionary Reporters**, who sometimes reported and sometimes did not
- **Consistent Nonreporters**, who never reported
- **Uninvolved**, who have never encountered suspected child abuse
Categories of Reporters by %

- Consistent Reporters: 44%
- Discretionary Reporters: 33%
- Consistent Non-reporters: 17%
- Uninvolved: 6%

Source: Gail Zellman, *Child Abuse Reporting and Failure to Report Among Mandated Reporters*
Reasons FOR Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

- Legal and Professional Responsibilities
- Immediate Intervention
- Provide Assistance
Reasons FOR Reporting

- **LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**
  - Legal requirement
  - Fear of lawsuit
  - Workplace policy

- **PROVIDE ASSISTANCE**
  - Get help for child / family
  - Ensure continued treatment
  - Alert family to seriousness

- **IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION**
  - Stop maltreatment
  - Involve Child Protective Services expertise
  - Police to quickly protect child
Why Mandated Reporters FAIL to Report Suspected Child Abuse

- Personal concerns
- Concerns about the effects of a report
- Victim characteristics
- Case characteristics
- Evidence issues
- System concerns
Why Mandated Reporters **FAIL** To Report

- **PERSONAL CONCERNS**
  - Time consuming
  - Not sure how to do it
  - Fear of lawsuit for reporting
  - Discomfort with family
  - Unwilling to breach
  - Fear of losing job
  - Fear of being disciplined
  - Bad personal experience with reporting
  - Fear of retribution

- **CONCERNS ABOUT EFFECTS**
  - Increased Risk
  - Family Disruption
  - Treatment Disruption
  - Fear of hurting someone they have connection with (child, family, parents)
Why Mandated Reporters FAIL To Report

- **EVIDENCE ISSUES**
  - “I can’t ‘see’ it because I can’t think about it”
  - Not serious enough
  - Initial impression misleading
  - Lack of evidence

- **SYSTEM CONCERNS**
  - Help child better myself
  - Authorities do nothing
  - CPS overreacts
  - “…but I turned out okay”
  - Insensitive Police response
  - “Bad things happened to me in the system”

- **VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS**
  - Adult victim

- **CASE CHARACTERISTICS**
  - Already reported
  - Situation resolved
How to Use Typical Concerns and Anecdotes in Staff Training

1. Select concerns and anecdotes from the following slides to use for your staff training.

2. Ask staff to read and discuss each concern individually or in small groups.

3. Instruct staff to focus on potential risks, barriers, fears, and concerns raised in examples.

4. Facilitate sharing out of discussions.

5. Relate discussions to your program and consider any policies and procedures that may need to be modified to address issues raised in discussions.
Typical Concerns: Guided Role Play

From Caregivers of Young Children: Preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment

- The parents seem like very angry people. What if the parents come after me.
- I have no right to intervene in a family’s affairs.
- Their cultural practices are different from mine. I have no right to impose my child-rearing beliefs on them.
Typical Concerns: Guided Role Play

From Caregivers of Young Children: Preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment

- I’ve worked with this parent and family for 5 years. I just can’t believe he would sexually abuse the children. There must be some other explanation.

- I just started at the center and don’t want to be considered a troublemaker… but Mrs. Littleton is extremely rough with the children, and yesterday she left finger marks on both of Carmen’s arms.
The last time I reported, nothing happened. The child is still with his family, and the father is still abusing him. The CPS caseworker never even got in touch with me...This time, I’m not going to bother reporting.

I really don’t think anything will get done, so what’s the use of reporting.
Typical Concerns: Guided Role Play

From Caregivers of Young Children: Preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment

I might be sued by the parents for making a false report.

In every State, mandated reporters are immune from civil liability for making a report in good faith (where knowledge or reasonable suspicion exists), even if it is not substantiated by the investigator. Even if someone does sue you, the court will dismiss the case when they find out that you are a mandated reporter. Some States have provisions to pay your legal fees if you must defend a lawsuit.
Anecdotal Cases

- My agency’s Policies & Procedures require me to report all suspected abuse to the nurse. I am told that the nurse will *handle* all reports.

- I usually ask parents about their child’s allegations before deciding to report.

- My director is good friends with the mother of a child who has disclosed to me. I don’t want to lose my job.
Anecdotal Cases

• The Head Start mental health consultant reports that the mother of a boy in the program is the victim of domestic violence. The child’s teacher reports that the boy is using degrading words when he speaks to girls in the class.

• A friend approaches me and tells me her sister is the victim of domestic violence. She also indicates that the young children in the home are witnessing the violence. My friend knows that I am a mandated reporter.
Draft Policy on Confidentiality regarding Suspected Child Abuse Reports: The parent or guardian of the child involved will be informed unless the safety and well-being of the child is jeopardized by doing so.

Even though I see new suspicious bruises, I don’t need to report. We already reported on this child last week.
Conclusion

- Identifying Child Abuse
- Mandated Reporters
- Reasons for Reporting
- Why Mandated Reporters Fail To Report Suspected Child Abuse
- Typical Concerns and Anecdotal Cases
Remember...Protect Our Children

IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE REPORT!

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References

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Who's There to Protect the Child

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