



Kids Central, Inc.

Orientation & Training Division

MENTAL HEALTH COMPONENT

Module: 2

Topic: Child Abuse and Positive Discipline



SECTION 1. STATE LAW

1. Every employee is required by law to report any suspected child abuse to a local or state law enforcement agency, which would include the County's Sheriff Department, local Police Department, or Virginia Department of Social Services (Child Protective Services). This reporting must also be done in a timely manner, which means as soon as it is reasonable to report.

The 1-800 phone number of the Virginia Department of Social Services is posted in all of our Centers. This is also found in the blue pages or State government pages of any phone book. This can also be reported by calling your local police or sheriff departments or calling 911.

This call will be done by the employee who observes signs of suspected child abuse, or the employee can do this in conjunction with their supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, the employee must be responsible for reporting the suspected abuse in a timely manner.

2. If a child under our care has been abused, and it is determined that we should have noticed this, the employees who have been directly involved in this child's care and education, could be held accountable for not reporting this through fines, jail time and possibly sued by the parents or guardians of the child. Also, it is possible that the agency could be held legally responsible.

3. Signs of child abuse could include, but not be restricted to:

Physical:

- o burns
- o black eye(s)
- o bruises
- o bumps
- o cuts

Emotional:

- o undue crying
- o child talks about being hurt
- o extreme withdrawal
- o child show marked fear
- o child is very aggressive

Mental:

- o child acts out abusive behavior with dolls or other toys
- o child makes up stories of an abusive nature
- o child recommends severe punishment of other children or self

4. If for any reason an employee feels threatened or unsafe in reporting suspected child abuse, the employee is protected by this law.

The law does not require the person reporting to give their name or place of employment. It is recommended that if you do call and do not give your name that you use a code name for identification so that at a later date you can demonstrate that you did do what this law requires.



SECTION 2: AGENCY POLICY

1. Our main concern is prevention of child abuse through parent education and careful monitoring of our own behaviors. Monitoring our own behaviors involves many things, including but not limited to:

- Ensure that all Head Start programs are properly supervised.
- Do not be alone with a single child, unobserved by other staff, volunteers, or parents, except in cases of emergency.
- Do not relate to children in non-Head Start activities, such as babysitting, weekend trips, or other activities without the permission (in writing) of the Head Start Director.
- Do not discipline children by use of physical punishment, neglect, abusive language, obscene gestures, displays of favoritism, and/or any action that is injurious or neglectful to a child's emotional or physical needs.
- Be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children when they enter the center. Alert your supervisor immediately of any signs of injury, unusual behavior, or suspected abuse.
- Physical displays of affection should be limited to hugs.

2. Reporting procedures:

- First, Contact Child Protective Services by telephone. This may be done in conjunction with your Center Lead Teacher. Be sure to get the name of the individual taking the report and the case number assigned to the report. (Case number may not be assigned when you make the initial phone call, so it may be necessary to call back later to get this number.)

- Second, Contact appropriate Supervisor or Executive Director by telephone.
- Place documentation of Case Number in Child's Center File. This is the only information that needs to be kept at the center.
- For documentation purposes only, a Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect form should be filled out and sent to the appropriate Supervisor as soon as possible after their observation has been made.



SECTION 3: POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

There are three major components of classroom oriented positive discipline: stress relief, classroom management, and behavior guidance.

1. Stress relief

- For staff ... *(This list is not all inclusive.)*
 - have play oriented and group supported activities for staff only,
 - exercise
 - become more knowledgeable about problem solving,
 - positive feedback for jobs done well
 - be able to share concerns in a non judgmental atmosphere
 - have consistency of rules
 - have opportunities to be creative and expressive
 - be part of a team
 - have authority equal to responsibility.
- For children ...
 - group exercise activities, such as, singing and dancing.
 - individuals activities, such as, play dough, sand pouring, warm water play, reading or listening to a story, etc
 - things that help us as adults are also beneficial to children, such as, having a concerned listener to our problems, being praised for doing what we do, feeling part of something important, etc.

2. Classroom management

- Have a well organized classroom. Well organized in terms of mobility, attractiveness, and safety/comfort.
- Have a well planned effective instructional program. Are all of the people (staff, volunteers, and children) in the classroom challenged in an inviting way? Have activities that involve creativity as part of the doing and allow for a large enough range of creativity so as not to elicit fear of failure in lesser developed individuals.
- Have an array of activities that range from very passive to very active.
- Promote positive behaviors through redirection, transition activities, one-on-one opportunities, a variety of means of expression, methods for people to express frustration and complaints, and promotion of consistent positive feedback.

3. Behavior Guidance

- Be well versed in a variety of behavioral techniques.
- For the more vigorous “acting out” children have a plan or strategy for promoting positive behaviors. It is often best to have a “team plan” that involves the parent, Education Specialist, other classroom teacher and volunteers in the classroom, and possibly other center staff.
- Be familiar with the Handout The ABC’s of Behavior Management.
- Address behaviors or patterns of behavior as soon as you notice these.

Try to avoid letting things build up into “impossible” or extremely frustrating levels of unacceptableness before discussing the matter with someone else.