



Updated 2/2017

## **Reporting: Receiving & Submitting a Report of Abuse**

### **Video Outline**

#### **CENTRAL IDEA**

It is important to use the H.E.L.P. strategy when receiving and responding to cases of abuse. You have the ability to help the victim heal by the way you receive and respond to the situation. Abuse must be reported to the Child Advocate. The Child Advocate can help you identify and navigate the risks and process of reporting. The three types of abuse reports are Suspicion, Witness, and Disclosure.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Identify the 3 types of reports and the timeframe in which each should be submitted.
- Define and describe the H.E.L.P. strategy.
- Identify the information that should be included in a report.
- Understand the possible unintended outcomes.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

*(None)*

#### **RECEIVING A REPORT OF ABUSE**

##### **H.E.L.P. STRATEGY**

- Stands for Health, Empowerment, Listening, Protection
- Each step occurs continually and simultaneously

##### **HEALTH**

- In case of emergency, health must be addressed first
  - In most cases, health can be discussed last
- Must ensure that mental AND physical health are cared for
  - Mental assistance may be needed (listening) before physical assistance so that the victim can process the trauma, shock, and fear of the events
  - Ask indirect questions about mental health, such as “How are you feeling?” and “Are you having trouble sleeping/eating?”
    - Exception is suicide: ask directly if victim has thoughts of killing himself/herself
- Encourage medical treatment, but do not force
  - Direct questions may be used to ascertain physical injury
  - Ask victim if they’d like to discuss injuries with member of the same gender

- Victims of Sexual Abuse:
  - Time is important to gather physical evidence
  - Encourage victim NOT to shower or wash if the assault occurred recently.
  - Suspected STIs best treated early

### EMPOWERMENT

- Victims have been disempowered by abusers; YOU have the ability to re-empower the victim
  - Want to help victim feel proactive and assertive
  - Allow victims to set boundaries and make decision
- Ask questions more than making statements
  - “Would you like me to go with you to the police?”
  - “Would you like me to go with you to tell your parents?”
- Assert victim’s right to body and to make decisions
  - Strongly encourage, but do not force action
- Be upfront and honest about your responsibilities and what will happen
  - Do not hide information from victim;
- Stay with victim throughout the process (if that is their wish)

### LISTENING

- Be an active, engaged, and interested listener
- Let victim talk without interruption or problem solving
- Be open and non-judgmental
- Think about you would hear the words if you had been victimized

### PROTECTION

- First and foremost, victim needs to feel protected and safe
  - “Do you feel safe for tonight?”
- Think of others whose safety that might be affected
  - “Is anyone else in danger from this abuser?”
- Understand the difference between victim feeling safe and being safe
  - Both are important.

### **SUBMITTING A REPORT OF ABUSE**

- Familiarize yourself with the reporting chain for your organization
  - All organizations should have a process in place to report abuse
  - Drop Box, Email Address, or Specific Person
  - Use your organization’s process
- Remember, a Report is not an accusation
  - When in doubt, report!

- After reporting, let the Child Advocate do his/her job
  - Do not investigate further
  - Only report new information
- It is YOUR responsibility to follow-up if you do not receive confirmation of reception

### 3 TYPES OF REPORTS

- 1) Suspicion: you or someone has seen concerning behaviors
  - Submit a written report to Child Advocate as soon as possible
- 2) Witness: you see a child being abused
  - If possible, stop the abuse without further harm to child or others
  - Best to diffuse situation, leave an 'easy out' for the abuser
  - Call the Child Advocate as soon as situation is concluded
  - Submit a written report to child advocate the within 24 hours
- 3) Disclosure: someone tells you of abuse
  - Address immediate health and safety concerns of victim
  - Contact Child Advocate immediately if life threatening situation
  - Submit a written report to child advocate within 24 hours
  - Location of Disclosure
    - make sure location is visible, well-lit, conducive to hearing & speaking
    - respect privacy of victim

### BASIC INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN A REPORT

- Date
- Reporter's Name
- Subject's Name (the victim -- & discloser's name, if they are not the same)
- Narrative
- Actions taken by reporter
- Reporters contact info

### **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF SUBMITTING A REPORT**

- Victim is at increased risk during reporting and investigation process
- Be aware of dangers
  - Abuse within a family, the other siblings/adults might be at risk
  - Increased risk of suicide or running away
  - In the case of Sexual Abuse, victim might be perceived as "damaged"
    - Victim and the siblings might be married immediately
    - Sold into prostitution or human trafficking
    - Breast pounding
    - Female Genital Mutilation
    - Child(ren) sent away
    - Stoning, throwing acid, caning, ostracization, honor killings

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- Ask child of concerns in general questions
  - Do not instill fear
  - “How do you think your parents would act if they knew?”
  - “How can I keep you safe?”
- You have the ability to help the victim heal by the way you receive the person and address the situation.
- None of this must be handled alone!
  - Child Advocate is there to help you identify and navigate the risks.