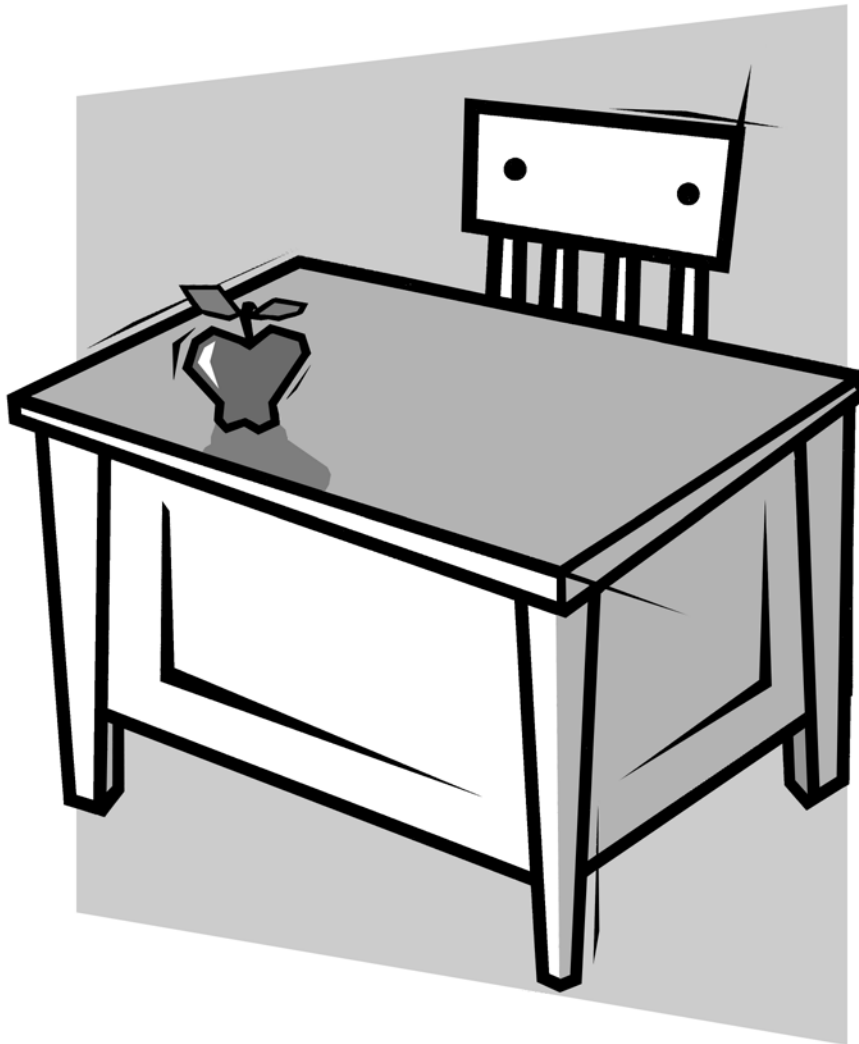


In a Child's Best Interest



*A Guide for West Virginia
School Personnel in
Recognizing and Reporting
Child Abuse and Neglect*

Provided by the TEAM for West Virginia Children

www.teamwv.org • www.preventchildabusewv.org



**TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT, CALL YOUR LOCAL
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES DURING BUSINESS HOURS**

Or

**the W.Va. Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (24 hours a day):
1-800-352-6513
Voice/TDD Accessible**

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Introduction

Ensuring Children's Rights

While everyone should be concerned about child abuse and neglect, certain groups of people are more likely to have the opportunity to recognize and report abuse and neglect. Some of those people are required by law to do so. As school personnel, you are one of those people.

This book is designed to assist you in that role. By taking the time to read through this material, you should become more discerning in your observations and have a better understanding of the child abuse and neglect reporting process.

This booklet contains information on:

- * Definitions of child abuse and neglect
- * Key indicators to look for in recognizing cases of possible abuse or neglect
- * Issues and concerns about reporting
- * Procedures for reporting
- * An explanation of what happens after a report is made
- * Ways school personnel can help prevent child abuse

**Let's join together in protecting
West Virginia's children.**

Table of Contents

1 RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT.....1-11

Causes of Abuse and Neglect.....	1
Legal Definitions	1
Kinds of Abuse and Neglect.....	2
PHYSICAL ABUSE	3
Physical Indicators.....	3
Child Behavioral Indicators	4
Caregiver Characteristics.....	4
PHYSICAL NEGLECT	4
Physical Indicators.....	5
Child Behavioral Indicators	5
Caregiver Characteristics.....	5
SEXUAL ABUSE.....	6
Physical Indicators.....	7
Child Behavioral Indicators	7
Caregiver Characteristics.....	7
MENTAL / EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT	8
Physical Indicators.....	9
Child Behavioral Indicators	9
Caregiver Characteristics.....	9
The Importance of Observation by School Personnel	10
Parental Attitudes as Indicators.....	11

2 QUESTIONABLE SITUATIONS 12-14

A Fine Line Between Abuse and Discipline	12
Distinguishing Abuse from Accident.....	12
Latchkey Children.....	14

No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.

— Emma Goldman

3 REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT..... 15-20

Why Should I Report?	15
Who Must Report?	15
Am I Protected if I Report?	15
When Should I Report?	16
What If I Don't Report?	16
How Do I Report?	16
What If School Policy Requires Me to Report to the Principal or a Counselor?	17
Should I Inform the Parents of the Report?.....	18
What if I'm Not Sure?	18
What if the Abuse Occurred in the Past?	18
What if a Report Isn't Accepted by Child Protective Services?	19
Issue and Concerns About Reporting	19
<i>Previous Bad Experiences</i>	19
<i>The Belief That Nothing Will Be Done</i>	20
Confidentiality	20
<i>Identity of Reporters</i>	20
<i>Parental Rights to Access Child Abuse or Neglect Records</i>	20
Missing Children.....	20

4 RESPONDING TO THE CHILD VICTIM 21-22

How to Respond to the Child Who Reports Being Abused or Neglected.....	21
Techniques for Interaction With the Abused or Neglected Child	22

5 CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES' RESPONSE 23-25

What Happens After I Make a Report?.....	23
The Investigation.....	23
Right to Appeal Investigation Findings	23
Services Provided to the Family	24
Interviewing Children in Schools	24
Release of School Records to Child Protective Services	24
Photographs and X-rays.....	25
Feedback from Child Protective Services	25
Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)	25

6 WHEN CASES GO TO COURT 26-29

Civil Court Action and Testimony by School Employees	26
Legal Procedures	26
What Happens in Cases of Abuse and Neglect?	27
Cooperation with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).....	29
Criminal Prosecution.....	29

7 HOW SCHOOL PERSONNEL CAN HELP 30-34

You're the One with the Big Desk.....	30
Corporal Punishment	31
Verbal Abuse	31
Discipline or Punishment?	32
More Issues to Think About	32
Child Abuse Prevention	32
<i>Parenting Services for Parents</i>	33
<i>Parenting Education for Students</i>	33
<i>Prevention Programs in the Classroom</i>	34
<i>Creating a Positive Climate In Your Classroom</i>	34

8 APPENDIX 35-42

State and National Resources.....	35
WV Department of Health and Human Resources Offices	36
Child Protective Services Referral Form	37
Mandated Reporter Disclosure Aid.....	38
Case Histories	39
What Can Be Done to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect?	40
Ten Reasons to Prevent Child Abuse.....	41
About TEAM for West Virginia Children	42



Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect 1

Causes of Abuse and Neglect

Most people who abuse children are ordinary people who lack coping skills. Abusers come from all socioeconomic classes, races, ethnic heritage, religious faiths, occupations and educational levels. There are certain known factors which, when combined, increase the likelihood of abuse or neglect. A child abuser is often:

- * Isolated from the support of family and friends.
- * Lacking in social skills and parenting skills.
- * Someone who was abused as a child.
- * Under stress, such as marital, employment or financial problems.
- * Lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- * Not getting his/her emotional needs met.
- * A substance abuser (alcohol or other drugs).
- * Ignorant about principles of child development.
- * Overly dependent on the need to control.
- * Impulsive and easily frustrated.

Legal Definitions

According to West Virginia law [WV Code 49-1-3], an abused or neglected child is any child whose parent, guardian, or custodian (regardless of age) harms or threatens the child's health or welfare by:

- * Knowingly or intentionally inflicting, attempting to inflict or knowingly allowing another person to inflict physical injury or mental or emotional injury.
- * Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.
- * The sale or attempted sale of the child.
- * Refusal, failure, or inability to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care or education.
- * Excessive corporal punishment.
- * Domestic or family violence causing substantial emotional injury which harms or threatens the child's health or welfare.
- * Negligent treatment or maltreatment.
- * Abandonment, defined as a child without necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or supervision because of the disappearance or absence of the child's parent or custodian.

Kinds of Abuse and Neglect

Many people think that “child abuse” is limited to physical harm. In reality, child abuse includes:

- * physical abuse;
- * physical neglect;
- * sexual abuse;
- * mental/emotional maltreatment.

Physical injuries, severe neglect and malnutrition are more readily detectable than the subtle, less visible injuries which result from emotional maltreatment or sexual abuse. However, all categories of abuse endanger or impair a child’s physical or emotional health and development and, therefore, demand attention.

The presence of one or more indicators does not mean there is abuse in every instance, but should alert you to the possibility. Trained professionals will help to determine whether abuse occurred.

Most people who abuse children are known to the child. However, there are instances where children are abused by strangers.



PHYSICAL ABUSE

A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of physical abuse. You may notice physical and behavioral indicators by observing the child, and you may become aware of indicators that relate to the parent or caregiver.

Physical Indicators

Questionable bruises and welts:

- * on face, lips, mouth.
- * on torso, back, buttocks, thighs, arms.
- * in various stages of healing.
- * clustered, forming regular patterns.
- * reflecting shape of article used to inflict injury (electric cord, belt buckle).
- * on several different surface areas.
- * regularly appearing after absence, weekend, or vacation.
- * human bite mark.
- * bald spots.

Questionable burns:

- * cigar or cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks.
- * immersion burns (sock-like or glove-like, or doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia).
- * patterned like electric burner, iron, cigarette lighter, etc.
- * rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso.
- * singed hair.

Questionable fractures:

- * to skull, nose, facial structure.
- * in various stages of healing.
- * multiple or spiral fractures.

Questionable lacerations or abrasions:

- * to mouth, lips, gums, eyes.
- * to external genitalia.

Children need models more than they need critics.

— *Elbert Hubbard*

Child Behavioral Indicators

- * uncomfortable with physical contact.
- * wary of adult contacts.
- * apprehensive when other children cry.
- * behavioral extremes (aggressiveness or withdrawal).
- * frightened of parents.
- * afraid to go home.
- * arrives at school early or stays late as if afraid to be at home.
- * reports injury by parent or caregiver.
- * complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably.
- * wears clothing inappropriate to weather to cover body.
- * chronic runaway (adolescents).
- * reluctance to change clothes for gym activities (attempt to hide injuries, bruises, etc.).
- * self destructive.

Caregiver Characteristics

- * history of abuse as a child.
- * uses harsh discipline inappropriate to child's age, transgression, and condition.
- * offers illogical, unconvincing, or contradictory explanations of child's injury, or offers no explanation.
- * significantly misperceives child (for example, sees child as "bad", "stupid", "different", etc.).
- * psychotic or psychopathic personality.
- * misuses alcohol or other drugs.
- * attempts to conceal child's injury or to protect identity of person responsible.
- * unrealistic expectations of child, beyond child's age or ability.

PHYSICAL NEGLECT

Physical neglect is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. Physical neglect may include, but is not limited to:

- * abandonment.
- * lack of supervision.
- * lack of adequate bathing and good hygiene.
- * lack of adequate nutrition.
- * lack of adequate shelter.
- * lack of medical or dental care.
- * lack of required school enrollment or attendance.

A child is neglected under West Virginia law [WV Code 49-1-3] when the failure, refusal, or inability to provide for the child is not due primarily to a lack of financial means on the part of the parent, guardian or custodian.

A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of physical neglect. You may notice physical and behavioral indicators by observing the child, and you may become aware of indicators that relate to the parent or caregiver.

Physical Indicators

- * consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress.
- * consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities of long periods.
- * unattended physical problems or medical needs, including vision and hearing difficulties.
- * continuous lice or scabies, distended stomach, emaciated.
- * required immunizations neglected.
- * abandonment.

Child Behavioral Indicators

- * begging, stealing food.
- * extended stays at school (early arrival, late departure).
- * constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class.
- * alcohol or drug abuse.
- * delinquency.
- * states there is no caregiver.
- * frequently absent or tardy.
- * shunned by peers.
- * school dropout (adolescents).
- * self destructive.

Caregiver Characteristics

- * misuses alcohol or other drugs.
- * maintains chaotic home.
- * evidence of apathy or hopelessness.
- * mentally ill or diminished intelligence.
- * history of neglect as a child.
- * consistent failure to keep appointments.

A hundred years from now, nobody will remember who I was, what I did, or how much money I had; but the world may be a little different and a little better because I was important in the life of a child.

— Anonymous

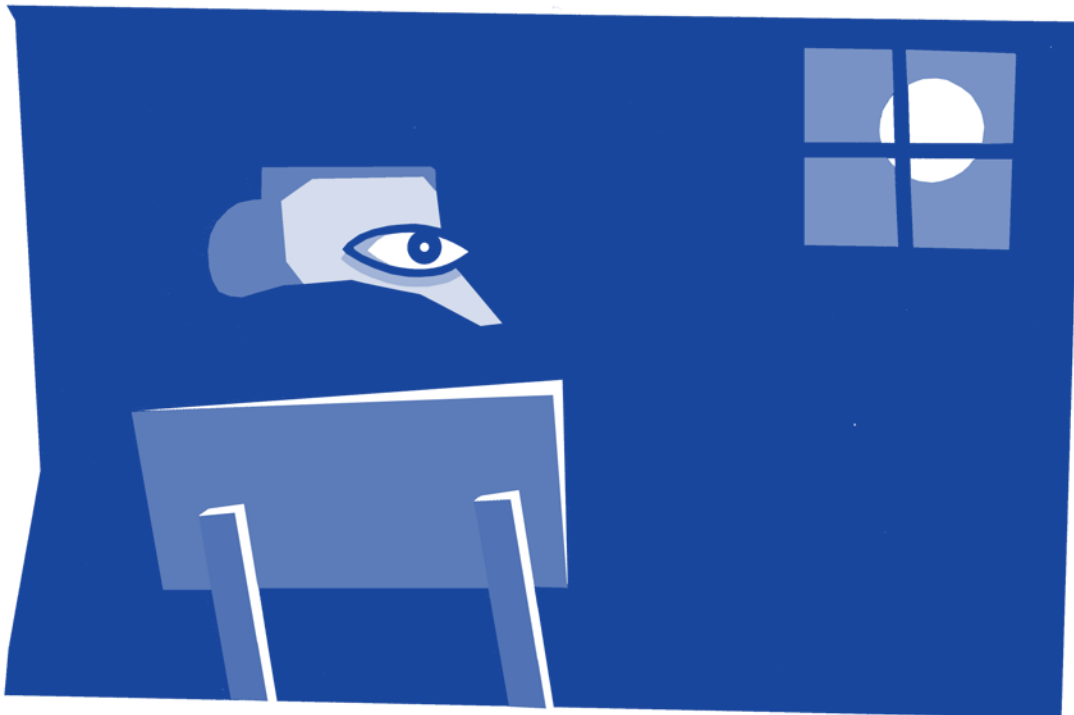
SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation of minors. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may consist of many acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Victims are both boys and girls, and range in age from less than one year through adolescence. Specifically, sexual abuse includes:

- * incest
- * rape
- * intercourse
- * oral-genital contact
- * fondling
- * sexual propositions or enticement
- * indecent exposure
- * child pornography
- * child prostitution

The nature of sexual abuse, the shame of the child victim, and the possible involvement of trusted parents, stepparents, or other persons in a caregiver role make it extremely difficult for children to come forward to report sexual abuse.

A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of sexual abuse. You may notice physical and behavioral indicators by observing the child, and you may become aware of indicators that relate to the parent or caregiver.



Physical Indicators

- * difficulty in walking or sitting.
- * torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- * pain or itching in genital area.
- * bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas.
- * venereal disease, especially in pre-teens.
- * frequent urinary or yeast infections.
- * pregnancy.

Child Behavioral Indicators

- * unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class.
- * withdrawal, chronic depression or infantile behavior.
- * bizarre or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge.
- * detailed and age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior (especially in young children).
- * unusually seductive behaviors with peers and adults.
- * poor peer relations.
- * delinquent or runaway (especially adolescents).
- * reports sexual abuse.
- * threatened by physical contact.
- * suicide attempt (especially in adolescents).
- * role reversal, overly concerned for siblings.
- * unexplained money or “gifts”.
- * poor self esteem, self devaluation, lack of confidence.
- * massive weight change.
- * complaints of bleeding in the genital area.

Caregiver Characteristics

- * extremely protective or jealous of child.
- * encourages child to engage in prostitution.
- * encourages child to engage in sexual acts in presence of caregiver.
- * sexually abused as a child.
- * misuses alcohol or other drugs.
- * non-abusing caregiver/spouse is frequently absent from the home, permitting access to child by abusing caregiver/spouse.

I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

— from Thich Nhat Hanh’s “Five Wonderful Precepts”

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

Just as physical injuries can scar and incapacitate a child, emotional maltreatment can similarly cripple a child emotionally, behaviorally, and intellectually. Varying degrees of emotional and behavioral problems are common among children who have been emotionally abused. Emotional maltreatment can include patterns of:

- * verbal assaults.
(screaming, intimidating, rejecting, ridiculing, blaming, sarcasm).
- * ignoring and indifference.
- * constant family conflict.

Emotional abuse can be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caregiver.

Cases of emotional abuse are extremely difficult to prove. A cause and effect relationship between the parent or caregiver's acts and the child's response must be established. These cases should be referred for evaluation and treatment as soon as possible.



Indicators of Emotional Maltreatment

A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of emotional maltreatment. You may notice physical and behavioral indicators by observing the child, and you may become aware of indicators that relate to the parent or caregiver.

Physical Indicators

- * speech disorders.
- * lags in physical development.
- * failure to thrive.

Child Behavioral Indicators

- * habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking in an older child).
- * conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive).
- * neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play).
- * behavior extremes: compliant, passive, undemanding, aggressive, demanding, rageful.
- * overly adaptive behavior:
“parents” other children inappropriately.
- * inappropriately infantile or emotionally needy.
- * developmental lags (emotional or intellectual).
- * delinquent behavior (especially adolescents).
- * self-destructive, attempted suicide.

Caregiver Characteristics

- * blames or belittles child.
- * ignores or rejects.
- * withholds love.
- * treats siblings unequally.
- * seems unconcerned about child’s problems.
- * unreasonable demands or impossible expectations without regard to child’s developmental capacity.

Words hit as hard as a fist.

— *Prevent Child Abuse America*

The Importance of Observation by School Personnel

Abused and neglected children may be found in any classroom in any school in any community.

Schools are often the only place where children are seen daily over periods of time by professionals trained to observe their appearance and behavior. The school setting offers a continuum of time for observation and an opportunity to compare and contrast behaviors which are normal with those which are abnormal. School personnel, therefore, may be aware that something is not right with a child long before anyone else notices.

The following indicators of abuse and neglect can be observed in the school setting. In addition to the indicators already outlined, school teachers and other school personnel are in a unique position to observe these physical and behavioral indicators of abuse and neglect.

- * The child tells you about an abusive or neglectful situation.
- * The child expresses fear of parents.
- * There are frequent or unexplained absences.
- * Bruises or injuries are evident after an absence.
(Abusive parents sometimes keep children home after a beating in an effort to conceal bruises or injuries.)
- * The child suffers from constant fatigue, listlessness, or consistently falls asleep in class.
- * Sudden changes in the child's behavior or academic performance. (Children act as barometers of their family environment. A sudden change in behavior or an abrupt drop in a child's academic performance may indicate a change in home life which has affected the child.)
- * The child frequently complains of pain and/or injury without apparent injury or illness.
- * A child with special needs. Research shows that the child with physical or intellectual disabilities is at greater risk of abuse and neglect than the child without disabilities.

When will justice come? When those who are not injured become as indignant as those who are.

— Leo Tolstoy

Parental Attitudes as Indicators

A good deal of important information can be gathered from routine conversation with parents and children. Parents and children will often reveal details of family life, discuss methods of discipline, and even request help with a problem in discussions with teachers or other school personnel. Conversations with parents can also reveal how they feel about their child. The abusive or neglectful parent may:

- * Appear disinterested in the child's problems.
- * Fail to keep appointments or return calls.
- * Become excessively angry at the child's performance.
- * Refuse to discuss the child's problems.
- * Seem overly protective or unwilling to "share" the child with anyone else.
- * Refer to the child as "different," "bad," "stupid," etc.
- * Show a lack of maturity.
- * Appear to perceive of him/herself as worthless or unable to cope with the child.

Be sure to see other indicators in the sections on physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment.



A Fine Line Between Abuse and Discipline

In order for children to grow up and become productive members of society, subject to society's norms, values and rules, all children need discipline. Discipline is a learning process designed to teach appropriate behaviors.

Unlike discipline, abuse is not a learning process. It is designed to stop behavior through inflicting pain. It does not teach alternative, corrective behavior. Therefore, abused children do not learn correct behavior. They learn to avoid punishment.

The intent of the reporting law is not to interfere with appropriate discipline but to respond to extreme or inappropriate parental or caregiver actions. Actions which are excessive or forceful enough to leave injuries are considered abusive.

Distinguishing Abuse From Accident

The very nature of childhood invites accidents. Children are curious and fearless. They run, climb, jump and explore. A child's motor skills usually outpace cognitive skills, which means the child can approach danger without recognizing it. The following is a guide to help you distinguish between accidental and non-accidental injuries. When observing an injury you suspect might be the result of abuse, consider:

- * **Location of the injury.** Certain locations on the body are more likely to sustain accidental injury. They include the knees, elbows, shins and forehead. Protected body parts and soft tissue areas, such as the back, thighs, genital area, buttocks, back of the legs, or face are less likely to come into contact accidentally with objects which could cause injury.
- * **Number and frequency of injuries.** The greater the number of injuries, the greater the cause for concern. Unless the child is involved in a serious accident, a number of different injuries is unlikely. Also, multiple injuries in different stages of healing may indicate abuse over time.
- * **Size and shape of the injury.** Many non-accidental injuries are inflicted with familiar objects: a stick, a board, a belt, a hair brush. Resulting marks bear strong resemblance to the object used. Accidental marks resulting from bumps and falls usually have no defined shape.

- * **Description of how the injury occurred.**
If an injury is accidental, there should be a reasonable explanation of how it happened that is consistent with the appearance of the injury. When the description of how the injury occurred and the injury are inconsistent, there is cause for concern. For example, it is not likely that a fall from a chair onto a rug would produce bruises all over the body.
- * **Consistency of injury with the child's developmental capability.** As children grow and gain new skills, their ability to engage in activities which can cause injury increases. A toddler trying to run is likely to suffer bruised knees and a bump on the head, but less likely to suffer a broken arm than is an eight-year-old who has discovered the joy of climbing trees. A two-week-old infant does not have the movement capability to self-inflict a bruise.

Remember that accidents do happen. Parents are not perfect. Injuries do occur that might have been avoided. Nevertheless, there is cause for concern when injuries recur and/or the explanation is inconsistent with the injury or the child's developmental abilities.



Latchkey Children

West Virginia law does not set a specific age at which a child can legally stay alone. In fact, age alone is not a very good indicator of a child's maturity level. Some very mature 10-year-olds may be ready to take care of themselves, while some 15-year-olds may not be ready due to emotional problems or behavioral difficulties.

In determining whether a child is capable of being left alone and whether a parent is providing adequate supervision in latchkey situations, Child Protective Services (CPS) will assess several areas. These areas include:

- * child's level of maturity. CPS will want to assess whether the child is physically capable of taking care of her/himself.
- * child's mental capability of recognizing and avoiding danger and making sound decisions.
- * child's emotional readiness to be alone.
- * child's knowledge of what to do and whom to call if an emergency arises.
- * child has no physical, emotional, or behavioral problems that make it unwise to be left alone.

It is important to note that a child who can care for him/herself may not be ready to care for younger children. Note these factors:

- * **Accessibility of those responsible for the child.** CPS will want to determine the location and proximity of the parents; whether they can be reached by phone and can get home quickly if needed; and whether the child knows the parents' location and how to reach them.
- * **The situation.** CPS will want to assess: the time of day and length of time the child is left alone; the safety of the home or neighborhood; whether the parents have arranged for nearby adults to be available in case a problem arises; and whether there is a family history of child abuse and neglect.

Children are our most valuable natural resource.

— Herbert Hoover

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect 3

Why Should I Report?

The purpose of required reporting is to identify suspected abused and neglected children as soon as possible so that they may be protected from further harm. Child Protective Services cannot act until a report is made. Consequently, as school personnel, you play a critical role in preventing any future harm to children.

Without detection, reporting, and intervention, these children may remain victims for the rest of their lives. Abused children don't just grow up and forget their childhood. They carry physical and emotional scars throughout their lives, often repeating the pattern of abuse or neglect with their own children.

School personnel can help stop the cycle of abuse and neglect.

Who Must Report?

Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect; however, under West Virginia law [WV Code 49-6A-2], certain persons are **required** to report. These persons include:

- * medical, dental or mental health professionals
- * Christian Science practitioners
- * religious healers
- * **school teachers and other school personnel**
- * social service workers
- * child care or foster care workers
- * emergency medical services personnel
- * peace officers or law enforcement officials
- * members of the clergy
- * circuit court judges, family court judges, magistrates, or employees of the Division of Juvenile Services
- * humane officers
- * youth camp administrators or counselors
- * employees, coaches, or volunteers of an entity that provides organized activities for children
- * commercial, film, or photographic print processors

As a result of Senate Bill 161 (effective June 8, 2012) ANY person over 18 who receives a disclosure from a credible witness or observes any sexual abuse or sexual assault of a child shall report or cause a report to be made to Child Protective Services or the State Police or other law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.

Am I Protected if I Report?

West Virginia law provides immunity from civil or criminal liability for persons reporting abuse in good faith [WV Code 49-6A-6].

When Should I Report?

Any time you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected or observe a child being subjected to conditions likely to result in abuse or neglect, you are required by law [WV Code 49-6A-2] to report your concerns to the local Child Protective Services (CPS), or to cause a report to be made, immediately, and not more than 48 hours later.

Furthermore, if you believe a child has suffered serious physical abuse or has been sexually abused or sexually assaulted, you must also immediately report your concerns to the State Police AND any local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction to investigate the complaint [WV Code 49-6A-2].

You need not prove that abuse or neglect has taken place; personnel from local CPS are responsible for making this determination. Your responsibility is to alert them to your suspicions.

What If I Don't Report?

Under West Virginia law, any required reporter of suspected abuse who knowingly fails to report shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Penalties include up to 30 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine [WV Code 49-6A-8].

Besides the legal consequences of failing to report, consider the emotional consequences. Will you be able to live with yourself if you know you didn't do everything possible to protect a child from harm?

How Do I Report?

When you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, you should report your concerns to the Child Protective Services (CPS) division of the state Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) in your community [WV Code 49-6A-5]. Local offices are open during daytime business hours and their telephone numbers are located on page 35.

Reports can also be made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-352-6513), 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

When making a report, it is helpful to provide as much information as possible, if known. Information you may be able to provide includes:

- * the name, address, and telephone number of the child and parents or other person(s) responsible for the child's care.
- * the child's birthdate or age, sex, and race.
- * the names and ages of other persons who live with the child and their relationship to the child.
- * whether or not there is a family member who can protect the child.
- * the name, address, and telephone number of the suspected abuser and his/her relationship to the child.
- * the nature and extent of the abuse/neglect, including any knowledge of prior maltreatment of the child or siblings.
- * information about the disciplinary practices of the parents and how the family functions.
- * information about the child's current condition and functioning.
- * whether the child is fearful about going home.
- * your name, address and phone number.
- * any other pertinent information.

You may report anonymously if you choose, but you are encouraged to give your name. This makes it possible for the CPS worker to contact you later if additional information is needed. Providing your name will also enable the CPS worker to inform you of the outcome of the investigation.

What If School Policy Requires Me to Report to the Principal or a Counselor?

The law is clear. As a school teacher or other school personnel, you are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the local Child Protective Services (CPS) or the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and to area law enforcement, or cause a report to be made [WV Code 49-6A-2; 49-6A-5]. **Simply reporting it to the school office, supervisor or principal is not enough.** Your supervisor or principal may supplement the report or cause an additional report to be made.

All school employees fall under the same reporting law. All must report their suspicions of child abuse and neglect.

Praise the children and they will blossom.

— Irish proverb

Should I Inform the Parents of the Report?

As school personnel, you have a relationship with the child and/or parents. However, you should not discuss the report to Child Protective Services (CPS) until you have obtained permission from CPS to do so, so that you do not place the child at further risk or interfere with the CPS and law enforcement investigation.

Filing a report of suspected child abuse or neglect can be described as “making a referral to request help and services for the child and family.”

Parents need to know that their problems are not unique, that they are not inherently “bad” parents, and that they can be helped. The intent of a report is to protect the child from further harm and to improve family relationships. Let the parents know that you want to continue your relationship with the family and that you believe that this is a problem which can be solved.

What if I’m Not Sure?

You may consult with your local Child Protective Services or with staff at the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

Be aware how your own biases may affect your decision about whether a particular injury or behavior is reportable. For example, will you be more likely to report a suspicious bruise on a child who lives in poverty than on a child from an upstanding family of the community?

If a child has shared information with you about abuse or neglect, this is enough for you to make a report. It is better to make your concerns known than to remain silent and possibly allow a child to remain unprotected.

What if the Abuse Occurred in the Past?

Any case of suspected child abuse or neglect where the victim is under 18 must be reported even if the abuse or neglect occurred in the past. The Child Protective Services worker will evaluate the situation to determine whether an investigation is warranted at the time of your report.

Our children are likely to live up to what we believe of them.

— Lady Bird Johnson

What if a Report Isn't Accepted by Child Protective Services?

Not all reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are accepted for investigation by Child Protective Services (CPS). When CPS decides not to investigate a report, it is usually because the report does not meet the legal definition of abuse/neglect; law enforcement has the responsibility to investigate; or the family's problems can be more effectively addressed by a different type of service.

CPS will notify any mandated reporter of whether an investigation has been initiated and when the investigation is completed [WV Code 49-6A-2a]. If a decision is made not to investigate, and you disagree, you may further discuss your concerns with the CPS supervisor. When a case is not appropriate for CPS, you may ask for suggestions or guidance in dealing with the family.

Issues and Concerns About Reporting

A report of suspected maltreatment is not an accusation. It is a request for the helping process to begin. The reporting process, however, may not always go smoothly. Difficulties may be encountered which can act as a barrier to reporting or can discourage continued involvement in situations of child abuse and neglect. Some of these difficulties are discussed below.

Previous Bad Experiences

Professionals who have had an unsatisfactory experience when reporting suspected child abuse or neglect may be reluctant to report a second time. These professionals may have been discouraged from reporting, or may have developed a distrust of Child Protective Services (CPS), feeling that a previous case was not handled to their satisfaction. These concerns are real. Things may not have gone as well as they could have. A previous bad experience, however, does not mean that the next time things will not be handled well. If you have an unfortunate experience with a CPS response, you should consider requesting intervention by a supervisor in the handling of the case.

School personnel must report regardless of their concerns or previous experiences. The law requires it, and no exemptions are made for those who have had a bad experience. In addition, while reporting does not guarantee that the situation will improve, not reporting guarantees that if abuse or neglect exists, the child will continue to be at risk.

The Belief That Nothing Will Be Done

Sometimes potential reporters are convinced that nothing will be done if they report, so they don't report. Aside from the legal considerations (failure to report is against the law in West Virginia) [WV Code 49-6A-8], such reasoning is faulty. If an incident of suspected child abuse or neglect is reported, some action will occur. At the very least, a record of the report will be made and your legal obligation will be fulfilled. On the other hand, if the incident is not reported, nothing will be done. **Abused and neglected children cannot be protected unless they are first identified, and the key to identification is reporting.**

Confidentiality

Identity of Reporters

The identity of all persons who report suspected child abuse or neglect is confidential; however, in some instances, despite the Child Protective Services worker's efforts to maintain confidentiality, families may be able to deduce the identity of the reporter. However, the reporter is protected from suit by the immunity clause if the report was made in good faith [WV Code 49-6A-6].

Parental Rights to Access Child Abuse or Neglect Records

Parents, the child(ren), and legal counsel may exercise their right to see all personal information, relating to him/herself, contained in the Child Protective Services case record [WV Code 49-7-1].

However, the individual requesting information is only given access to that portion of the record concerning him/herself, with safeguards taken to ensure the privacy rights of the other persons mentioned in the CPS case record, including keeping confidential the identity of the reporter.

Missing Children

In 1997, the State Department of Education began to develop and administer a program for the location of missing children enrolled in the West Virginia school system and for reporting of children who may be missing or who may be unlawfully removed from schools [WV Code 49-9-4]. The program includes the use of information from the Missing Child Information Clearinghouse (established under the W.Va. State Police). All school districts are required to participate.

How to Respond to the Child Who Reports Being Abused or Neglected

When a child tells you, openly or indirectly, about abuse or neglect, it is important to recognize the strength which this child has demonstrated by sharing the secret, as well as the trust the child has shown you by choosing you as a confidante.

Although it may be a difficult subject for you to discuss, it is important that you handle the disclosure with sensitivity. These general guidelines can help:

- * **Listen to what is being told to you.** Do not push the child to share more than he/she is willing. The child needs warmth and acceptance. It is not necessary at this time that intimate details be revealed.
- * **Do not ask direct questions of the child**—this might compromise the investigation.
- * **Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling you.** Acknowledge the difficulty of the decision and the personal strength shown in making this decision. Make it clear that the abuse or neglect is not the child's fault and that the child is not bad or to blame.
- * **Keep your own feelings under control.** Be calm and nonjudgmental. Be careful not to criticize or belittle the child's family.
- * **Use the child's own vocabulary.**
- * **Do not promise not to tell.** Know your limits. This is not a situation you can handle by yourself. However, do not discuss what the child told you with anyone who is not directly involved in helping the child.
- * **Tell the truth.** Don't make promises you can't keep, particularly relating to secrecy, court involvement, placement and social worker decisions.
- * **Be specific.** Let the child know exactly what is going to happen. Tell the child that you must report the abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. Tell the child that a social worker who helps families with these kinds of problems may be coming to talk with the child.
- * **Assess the child's immediate safety.** Is the child in immediate physical danger? Is it a crisis? Are there others in the home who can protect the child?
- * **Be supportive.** Remember why the child came to you. The child needs your help, support and guidance. Reassure the child that telling about the abuse or neglect was the right thing to do. It is the only way to make it stop.

When a child tells you that he or she has been abused, the child may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes disbelief. It is important for you to remain calm and in control of your feelings in order to reassure the child.

Try to help the child regain control. The child is about to become involved in a process in which the primary intent will be to determine the child's best interest. At times, this may seem to sweep the child up in a series of events that are beyond control. Although alternatives may be limited, it can help to let the child make decisions, whenever possible, to allow the child some sense of self-determination. For example, you might ask the child what you can do to help or make the process less difficult.

Techniques for Interaction With the Abused or Neglected Child

The following are tools or techniques that can be used by teachers and other school personnel with children who report abuse or neglect:

- * Never underestimate the power that a positive adult relationship can have in a child's life. Children take their cues from adults.
- * Make your classroom and school as safe as it can be. Structure and routine can help children regain a sense of personal control.
- * Ask permission before touching, again allowing a child to regain control.
- * Don't speak badly of the abuser. The abuser is often known and liked or loved by the child.
Suggested statements:
 - "What he/she did to you was wrong —*
 - I am sorry that it happened to you."*
 - "It was unfair of him/her to do that to you.*
 - I am sorry that it happened."*
- * Try not to act shocked, angry or upset at what a child may say or do. Remain open for more information.
Suggested statements:
 - "I'm wondering where you learned that."*
 - "I'm wondering who taught you how to do that."*
 - "I'm sorry that happened to you. We need to tell someone so that (abuser's name) can get help to stop doing that to you."*
- * Do not make a child feel different or singled out. Treat the child just like every other child, but with an extra dose of compassion.
- * Use your colleagues as resource people and for support, keeping in mind the child's right to privacy.

What Happens After I Make a Report?

When a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is made, Child Protective Services (CPS) staff must determine whether the situation described meets the legal definition of child abuse or neglect and whether CPS has the authority and responsibility to investigate. If not, the report is screened out. If so, the report is assigned.

CPS has two categories of workers: initial assessment and treatment. Initial Assessment CPS workers receive and investigate reports of abuse and neglect and make a finding as to whether (1) maltreatment occurred; (2) there is risk of maltreatment; and (3) the child is safe. Treatment CPS workers work with families whose cases are opened for further services and cases which go to court.

The Investigation

West Virginia law requires that in a report of imminent danger, a face-to-face interview with the child and the development of a protection plan must be made within 72 hours. In all other reports, a face-to-face interview with the child and the development of a protection plan must occur within 14 days. [WV Code 49-6A-9]

The CPS worker will interview the child, siblings (if necessary), the parents or caregivers, the alleged abuser, and any other people having information about the incident. Often the worker will come to the school to interview the child. It's important to note that CPS workers do NOT need the parents' consent to interview the child. [WV Code 49-6A-9(b)(3)]

Through interviews, observation, and information gathering, the CPS worker will, within 30 days, make a finding about:

- (1) whether or not maltreatment occurred;
- (2) the degree of risk of maltreatment; and
- (3) whether the child is safe.

Right to Appeal Investigation Findings

Clients have the right to file a grievance. They may obtain forms from their local Department of Health and Human Resources office.

Services Provided to the Family

While the immediate objectives of an investigation are to gather the facts and protect the child from immediate harm, these are not the only objectives. The CPS worker is also responsible for helping the parents identify and solve the problems that may have caused maltreatment. The CPS worker helps the parents acquire the knowledge and skills needed to provide adequate care for their children.

Services are provided to the family by the CPS worker and/or community agencies. These services may include: individual and/or family counseling; parenting groups or classes; homemaker services; respite day care; or family supervision, provided through home visits by the CPS worker or another agency.

The length of time that CPS provides services to a family varies from case to case and is dependent on the continued risk of harm to the child.

Interviewing Children in Schools

During an investigation, the Child Protective Services (CPS) worker may request to interview the child victim and/or siblings at school. You may request identification from the CPS worker, such as a photo id badge.

The school setting provides a safe environment, away from the alleged abuser and site of the abuse. The neutral setting may lessen the child's anxiety, making it easier to talk about what has happened.

Consent of the parent or guardian to interview the child at school is not required under West Virginia law. [WV Code 49-6A-9(b)(3)] The interview is conducted in private, without the presence of school staff, in order to respect and preserve the child's and family's rights to privacy. If the CPS worker determines that it is in the child's best interest for school staff to be present during the interview, the worker may request the presence of a specific individual.

Release of School Records to Child Protective Services

During the course of a child abuse or neglect investigation, the Child Protective Services (CPS) worker may request the release of school records. West Virginia law requires schools to provide CPS with assistance and information to enable it to fulfill its responsibilities for investigating allegations of child abuse or neglect and providing services in the best interests of the child. [WV Code 49-6A-9(e)] Once school records are obtained from CPS, they become a part of the CPS case file. Therefore, all documents in possession of CPS shall be made available to the parent, child or attorney with written consent of the child or by a subpoena.

Photographs and X-rays

A CPS worker, in the course of an investigation of reported child abuse, may take photos of the child, yard, home and car without the permission of the parent or guardian. [WV Code 49-6A-4]

Feedback from Child Protective Services

Intrusion into family life to protect a child is a highly sensitive matter necessitating confidentiality. Due to strict Federal and state laws concerning the release of Child Protective Services information, the CPS worker is restricted in the information that can be discussed with individuals outside of the family. [WV Code 49-7-1]

The CPS worker is permitted to give school employees information that is in the best interests of the child. At a minimum, you will be informed that a report has been investigated and determined to be unsubstantiated or that necessary action has been taken.

If you are not contacted by the CPS worker within 45 days of the date of the report and you wish to learn the outcome of the investigation, you may call the worker assigned to the case or the supervisor.

Multi-Disciplinary Treatment Teams (MDT)

In 1995, a system for evaluation of and coordinated service delivery for children who may be victims of abuse or neglect and children undergoing delinquency proceedings, known as multi-disciplinary teams (MDT), was established [WV Code 49-5D]. The Investigation MDT, headed by the prosecuting attorney, is responsible for coordinating the initial and ongoing investigation of all civil and criminal allegations pertinent to cases involving child abuse [WV Code 49-5D-2].

If the case goes into court, a Treatment MDT will be formed and school personnel are an essential part of this team. The Treatment MDT is to assist the court in facilitating permanency planning, to recommend alternatives, and to coordinate evaluations and in-community services. Members may participate by telephone or video conferencing.

Rules of confidentiality do not apply within the MDT, allowing for full and appropriate sharing of information. MDT members are bound by laws of confidentiality not to release information beyond the MDT and, if applicable, the court. [WV Code 49-5D-3]

If you wish to participate in a Treatment MDT for a particular student, notify the CPS worker of your interest. You may request release time to participate in a MDT meeting involving a student.

Civil Court Action and Testimony by School Employees

Most cases of child abuse or neglect do not require court involvement. Most families will accept help in correcting the circumstances which caused the maltreatment. However, where there is evidence of abuse or neglect and the family does not do what is necessary to ensure the child's safety, a petition may be filed in circuit court by Child Protective Services or by any responsible adult [WV Code 49-6-1]. The court is a place where the rights of the child and the parents are protected. Ultimately, the court will decide what is in the best interests of the child.

School employees may be requested to provide written reports or testimony to assist the court in making a decision. In some cases, submitting written reports decreases the likelihood of having to testify. In those rare instances where school personnel are called to testify, you will be asked questions related to your credentials, what you observed and possibly your conversations with the child and parents.

Legal Procedures

The purpose of West Virginia's child welfare laws is to assure the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being of the child and to preserve and strengthen the child's family ties where possible. In all cases, the goal is to assure the child a safe and permanent home.

Child Protective Services (CPS) is required to address the safety, permanency and well-being of children who are abused and/or neglected. CPS will try to prevent the removal of the child if the child's safety in the home can be assured and if there are no aggravated circumstances* surrounding the maltreatment of the child under investigation, another child of the abusing parent, or another child in the household. If there are aggravated circumstances, then CPS will remove the child and petition the court for the termination of parental rights.

Removal and placement is traumatic for the child. The child often feels abandoned by the family and can even feel responsible for the problems in the home that led to removal. Removal can lead to feelings of insecurity as the child wonders if the family will ever be reunited. In addition, when a child is removed, the child must adjust to a new family—and possibly even a new school or community.

If it becomes necessary to remove the child, the CPS worker will give the parents or guardian an opportunity to place the child with relatives in order to preserve a sense of family identity. When this is not possible, placement in foster care or in group care may be necessary. The ultimate goal is to assure that the child is expeditiously placed in a safe, secure and permanent home. If the family can be reunited safely, then this option has priority.

*Aggravated circumstances include but are not limited to abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, sexual abuse, murder of another child or the child's other parent, voluntary manslaughter, attempted or conspired to commit murder or accessory before or after the fact, felonious assault resulting in serious bodily injury.

What Happens in Cases of Abuse and Neglect?

The following is a brief description of the legal procedures set forth in West Virginia law for cases of child abuse or neglect [WV Code 49-6].

In certain instances, West Virginia law permits Child Protective Services (CPS) and law enforcement officers to take a child into immediate protective custody for the protection of the child [WV Code 49-6-9]:

- * A CPS worker may take immediate emergency custody of a child in an emergency situation which constitutes imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child if the worker has probable cause to believe that the child will suffer additional abuse or neglect or will be removed from the county before a petition can be filed and temporary custody ordered.
- * A law enforcement officer may take a child into protective custody for up to 96 hours without a court order if the child has been abandoned or requires emergency medical treatment and the parent is absent or refuses to permit the treatment.

Whether protective custody has been taken or not, the next step is a child abuse and/or neglect petition. The petition is usually filed by the CPS worker, and it alleges the specific abusive or neglectful conduct, including time and place, and explains how such conduct comes within the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. The petition details any supportive services provided by CPS to remedy the alleged circumstances, and explains the relief sought. After the petition is filed, the Circuit Court must set a hearing and appoint counsel. (If there is a temporary custody order in effect, this hearing is to be scheduled within 30 days).

The Circuit Court may grant temporary emergency custody to the WV Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) or to a responsible relative

All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others.

— *Gandhi*

for not more than 10 days pending a preliminary hearing if the child is in imminent danger and there are no reasonable alternatives to removing the child from the home. (Reasonable alternatives might include medical, psychiatric, psychological, or homemaking services for the family while the child remains in the home but in the state's custody.)

If the alleged abuser is a member of the household, the child may not remain in the home unless the abusing person is removed by court order. Other children in the home are included in the custody issue whether it is alleged they have been abused or not. They may be removed temporarily if the court finds imminent danger and a lack of reasonable alternatives to removal. If one child is in imminent danger, then all children in the home are presumed to be.

The next step is a preliminary hearing. If the court finds that continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the child, it may grant custody to the DHHR or a responsible relative or other appropriate agency or person temporarily.

At this time, the court may also grant an improvement period for the parent or custodian for a period of months to try to remedy the circumstances that led to the petition of abuse or neglect, if the parent or custodian proves by clear and convincing evidence that he/she will fully participate in such an improvement period. If allowed, a family case plan is developed by CPS and the multidisciplinary treatment team (MDT), which details services to be provided to the family and lists specific, measurable, realistic goals to be achieved by the parent or custodian.

At the end of the improvement period (if one is granted), there is an adjudicatory hearing. The court makes a determination as to whether the child has been abused or neglected. The parent or custodian may seek a post-adjudicatory improvement period. After adjudication, the child's Case Plan will be developed.

Finally, there is a dispositional hearing [WV Code 49-6-5]. The court may:

- * dismiss the petition.
- * refer the child, abusing parent(s), the battered parent or other family member(s) to a community agency and dismiss the petition.
- * return the child to the home under supervision of the CPS.
- * order terms of supervision to assist the child and abusing parent(s) or battered parent.
- * upon finding the abusing parent(s) or battered parent unwilling or unable to provide adequately for the child's needs, commit the child to the temporary custody of the state, department, licensed welfare agency, or suitable guardian.
- * in some cases, grant another improvement period of not more than 6 months with a possible 3-month extension.
- * terminate the parental rights of a child who has been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

If the court decides there is not reasonable likelihood that the conditions

of abuse or neglect can be substantially corrected in the near future, and when necessary for the welfare of the child, the court will terminate parental, custodial and guardianship rights and commit the child to permanent sole custody of the non-abusing parent (including a battered parent), if there is one, or terminate parental rights and commit the child to the guardianship of the DHHR or a licensed child welfare agency. The court will not terminate parental rights if a child, age 14 or older, objects.

At each step in the legal process, the court is concerned with the safety and best interests of the child, and if possible, preservation and reunification of the family.

Cooperation with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

Since 1991, judges in West Virginia in communities where there is a CASA program have been able to appoint a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for a child involved in civil child abuse proceedings. The CASA is a volunteer from the local community who has been trained to advocate for the best interests of a child who has come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.

The CASA volunteer, acting under order of the court, reviews records; facilitates prompt, thorough review of the case; and interviews appropriate parties to make recommendations on what would be in the best interests of the child.



The CASA volunteer respects the right to privacy by keeping information confidential that would identify parties involved in CASA cases.

If you are the teacher, principal, or counselor of a child in DHHR custody, you may be contacted by the CASA volunteer for information. You should request to see the CASA's identification and a copy of the court order appointing the CASA to the case before providing information. The CASA may wish to discuss the child's attendance, academic performance, social adjustment or other issues relating to the child's day-to-day functioning in school. The CASA would also appreciate being contacted about any significant developments relating to the child. The better the information gathered by the CASA, the more effective the CASA can be in advocating for the child's best interest in any legal proceedings or during multi-disciplinary team meetings.

To check and see if there is a CASA program in your area, contact the West Virginia CASA Association at www.wvcasa.org.

Criminal Prosecution

Child Protective Services is required to report all cases of serious physical abuse and all cases of sexual abuse and sexual assault to the county Prosecuting Attorney's office. Criminal prosecution is at the sole discretion of the Prosecutor.

You're the One With the Big Desk

Until now, this book has focused on the treatment children receive from parents and other caregivers. This section deals with the treatment they can expect to receive from another set of adults central to their lives—their teachers.

Usually, a teacher is the only adult in a room full of children. Issues of control and discipline will naturally come up, and the way a teacher deals with these is important to students' physical, mental and emotional development. Take a moment to think about the treatment students can expect to receive from you.



Corporal Punishment

“Sticks and stones can break my bones...”

How familiar are you with the law regarding corporal punishment? Is it okay to spank a child if the child’s parent approves? Is paddling allowed if it is done by an administrator rather than a teacher?

West Virginia law specifically prohibits any school employee from administering corporal punishment [WV Code 18A-5-1]. In addition, the state board of education and local boards of education are directed by law to adopt policies which encourage the use of alternatives to corporal punishment, provide for the training of school personnel in such alternatives, and involve parents and guardians in the maintenance of school discipline.

The law is clear; there is to be no paddling, striking, beating or other physical punishment of children by school employees, whether or not the children’s parents give permission or encouragement.

Verbal Abuse

...but words can never hurt me.”

We all know that words can hurt. Few teachers would intentionally belittle, humiliate or shame a child. But what happens when you’re angry and frustrated? Have you ever said something you regret?

Picture this: You’ve just blown your top and said something hurtful to a child. Like it or not, this happens to most of us at one time or another, and when it does, the important question is: What do you do next? Do you pretend it didn’t happen because it would be a sign of weakness to apologize? Or do you stop and use this as a teachable moment? It is okay to tell a child “Your behavior was unacceptable, and we must deal with that, but you don’t deserve to be spoken to like that. I’m sorry.”

We are guilty of many errors , but our worst crime is abandoning the children. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time, bones are being formed, blood is being made, senses are being developed. To the child we cannot answer “Tomorrow.” The child’s name is “Today.”

— Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral

Discipline or punishment?

It has been said that the purpose of punishment is to hurt, but the purpose of discipline is to teach. Which do you employ in your classroom?

Most educators would agree that their goal is to help children learn to be self-disciplined. What kind of adults do you want your students to grow up to be? When developing a classroom discipline plan, think about the difference between discipline and punishment and consider these questions:

- * Do you want your students to be focused on external or internal rewards?
- * Do you want your students to be operating from fear or from confidence?
- * Do you want your students to believe that “might makes right”?
- * Do you want your students to believe that adults are always right simply because they are adults?

More Issues to Think About

* You have decided that your classroom discipline plan will include notifying parents on a regular basis of how their child has behaved in class. How much do you know about how parents will react to a bad report? If you have misgivings about whether or how severely a parent might punish a child, are there other consequences you might use?

* The teacher across the hall is recognized as having the quietest, most well-behaved class in the school. Have you considered whether the children in the class feel free to speak out, or whether they’re intimidated and afraid? If you think there’s a problem, what can you do to help change the situation?

Child Abuse Prevention

Caring educators train themselves to notice signs of abuse and neglect, and follow the law in reporting these signs to the proper authorities. In addition, they take steps to make sure that their own classrooms are safe places where children are not mistreated. But they can do more. Educators can take a proactive stance and work to prevent and eliminate the cycle of abuse through supporting the provision of programs for children, parents and the community.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead

Parenting Services for Parents

Many parents are isolated from family and friends and have few places to turn for help. Schools can be a source of information not only for students but for their parents. Schools can be environments where parents feel comfortable talking and learning about topics that can make a daily difference in their interactions with children:

- * stress management strategies
- * discipline techniques
- * principles and stages of child development

Concerned parents and educators can join together to:

- * organize study groups
- * bring in speakers
- * distribute information

In addition, educators can arm themselves with knowledge about local service agencies and programs that can provide help to families in crisis. Consult the Appendix or your local Department of Health and Human Resources office.

Parenting Education for Students

We accept the fact that before receiving a license to drive a car, children receive instruction about the rules of the road and defensive driving techniques. Schools often provide life skills through courses in cooking, sewing, money management and woodworking, and the like. When it comes to skills for dealing with children, courses are usually limited and often only offered to students in particular vocational programs. Beginning in 1990, a parenting skills curriculum is required to be taught in the secondary grades of WV schools. [WV Code 61-8-9a]

Often, people who end up abusing or neglecting their children have not learned, through example or experience, other ways of dealing with the demands of children and family life. Schools can play an active role in reducing child abuse and neglect by providing all students with education and skills in such areas as:

- * child development
- * discipline techniques
- * coping skills & stress management
- * family life

Students who become parents while still in school face even greater risks for child abuse and have an even greater need for knowledge and skills. Schools can help by being flexible enough to accommodate these students and their special needs. Targeting dropout prevention programs to these students and providing child care are two examples of support for students who are parents.

Prevention Programs in the Classroom

Educators can use their classrooms to help children learn about child abuse, how they can protect themselves, and to whom they should go for help. WV law requires, to the extent funds are provided, county boards of education to establish child abuse prevention programs for students, parents and school personnel. [WV Code 18-5-15c] The State Department of Education has a curriculum model for child abuse prevention. Many service agencies provide speakers or prevention programs geared to students of various ages.

Creating a Positive Climate In Your Classroom

Here are some ways to nurture positive feelings in the classroom:

- * **Face to face greetings help children feel special.**
"Hi, Tommy, new haircut I see," "Look at all those sharpened pencils," or "Purple looks good on you."
- * **Use "I" messages to be specific about the behaviors you desire.**
"I need all eyes on me and all mouths closed. That's good. Now stay with me while I explain today's science project," instead of "Pay attention!"
- * **Give students permission to make mistakes.**
"Lots of people make mistakes when they're first learning to subtract, but I'll help you when you finish the first three problems. I'll check your paper to be sure you understand."
- * **Be specific in praise of each student and mention it frequently.**
"What neat handwriting, Paul." "You're such a good line leader, Grace." or "You really know your multiplication facts, Lucas."
- * **Give children positive attention by using their names.**
"Drew Smith had fifteen seashells. He gave Loretta six of them. How many did Drew have left?"
- * **Display student work, even if it's a word or a sentence.**
Have students copy and initial their work. Put it on a bulletin board or wall. These elicit student interest and pride.
- * **Create an environment of high expectations and genuine concern.**
"How are today?" "Are you OK?" and "I knew you could do it!"

It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.

— Eleanor Roosevelt

State and National Resources

National Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics
<http://www.aap.org>

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Child Maltreatment Prevention Page
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/>

Child Find of America Hotline
<http://www.childfindofamerica.org>
 1.800-I.AM.LOST

Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline
<http://www.childhelp.org/hotline>
 1.800.426.5678

Darkness to Light
<http://www.d2l.org>
 1.866. FOR.LIGHT

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
<http://www.missingkids.org>
 1.800.843.5678

National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Funds
<http://www.ctfalliance.org>

National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
<http://www.casaforchildren.org>
 1.800.628.3233

National Domestic Violence Hotline
<http://www.thehotline.org>
 1.800.799.SAFE or 1.800.799.7233

Prevent Child Abuse America
<http://www.preventchildabuse.org>
 1.800.CHILDREN or 1.800.244.5373

Runaway Switchboard
<http://www.1800runaway.org>
 1.800. RUNAWAY or 1.800.786.2929

West Virginia Resources

Mountain State Parents, Child, Adolescent Network (CAN)
www.mspscan.org
 1.800.CHILD85 or 1.304.233.5399

Our Babies: Safe and Sound
<http://www.safesoundbabies.com>

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia
<http://www.preventchildabusewv.org>
 1.866.4KIDSWV

TEAM for West Virginia Children
<http://www.teamwv.org>
 304.523.9587

West Virginia Child Advocacy Network
<http://www.wvcn.org/>
 304.414.4455

West Virginia Advocates
<http://www.wvadvocates.org>
 1.800.950.5250

West Virginia Child and Adult Abuse Hotline
 1.800.352.6513

West Virginia Child Care Association
<http://wvcca.org>
 304.340.3611

West Virginia Children's Trust Fund
<http://www.wvctf.org>
 304.558.4637

West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
<http://www.wvcadv.org>
 304.965.3552

West Virginia Court Appointed Special Advocate Association
www.wvcasa.org

West Virginia Court Improvement Program
www.wvcip.com

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Children and Families
www.wvdhhr.org/bcf

Bureau for Child Support Enforcement
www.wvdhhr.org/bcse

Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health
www.wvdhhr.org/mcfh

Child Abuse Prevention Page
www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/children_adult/ca-buseprev/default.asp

West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition
www.wvhealthykids.org

West Virginia Kids Count Fund
www.wvkidscountfund.org
 1.888. KIDSCOUNT

West Virginia Legislature's Office of Reference and Information
www.legis.state.wv.us
 1.877.565.3447

West Virginia Mental Health Consumers Association
<http://www.mhca.org>
 304.345.7312

West Virginia State Bar Legal Information Service
http://www.wvbar.org/public_information/
 1.800.642.3617

WV Department of Health and Human Resources Offices

Barbour	304-457-9030	Mineral	304-788-4150
Berkeley	304-267-0100	Mingo	304-235-4680
Boone	304-369-7802	Monongalia	304-285-3175
Braxton	304-765-7344	Monroe	304-772-3013
Brooke	304-794-3060	Morgan	304-258-1350
Cabell	304-528-5800	Nicholas	304-872-0803
Calhoun	304-354-6118	Ohio	304-232-4411
Clay	304-587-4268	Pendleton	304-358-2305
Doddridge	304-873-2031	Pleasants	304-684-9244
Fayette	304-465-9613	Pocahontas	304-799-2540
Gilmer	304-462-0412	Preston	304-329-4340
Grant	304-257-4211	Putnam	304-586-1520
Greenbrier	304-647-7476	Raleigh	304-256-6930
Hampshire	304-822-6900	Randolph	304-637-5560
Hancock	304-794-3060	Ritchie	304-643-2934
Hardy	304-538-2391	Roane	304-927-0956
Harrison	304-627-2295	Summers	304-466-2807
Jackson	304-373-2560	Taylor	304-265-6103
Jefferson	304-724-2600	Tucker	304-478-3212
Kanawha	304-746-2360	Tyler	304-758-2127
Lewis	304-269-6820	Upshur	304-473-4230
Lincoln	304-824-5811	Wayne	304-272-6311
Logan	304-792-7095	Webster	304-847-2861
McDowell	304-436-8302	Wetzel	304-455-0920
Marion	304-368-4420	Wirt	304-275-6551
Marshall	304-843-4120	Wood	304-420-2560
Mason	304-675-0880	Wyoming	304-732-6900
Mercer	304-425-8738		

Child Protective Services Referral Form

Mother's Name _____ Birth Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Father's Name _____ Birth Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Other adults in the home:

Name _____ Relationship _____ Birth Date _____

Name _____ Relationship _____ Birth Date _____

Child(ren) involved:

Name _____ Birthdate _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Name _____ Birthdate _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Name _____ Birthdate _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Please list a family member who can protect the child, if one is available:

Provide a brief but accurate description of the abuse and/or neglect including the abuser's name:

Information about the child(ren)s' current condition:

Mandated Reporter Disclosure Job Aid

What to do when a child or adult discloses suspected child abuse or neglect.

1. Find a private place to talk with the person.
2. Reassure the person making the disclosure ("I believe you.")
3. Listen openly and calmly, with minimal interruptions.
4. Write down the facts and words as the person has stated them. (Exact words are important to investigators.)
5. Do not promise not to tell, but respect the person's confidentiality by not telling others who don't need to know.
6. Tell the truth.
7. Be specific. Let the child know what is going to happen.
8. Assess the child's immediate safety.
9. Be supportive.
10. Report the disclosure immediately and no later than 48 hrs to CPS.

What NOT to say when someone discloses suspected child abuse or neglect.

1. Don't ask "why" questions such as: "Why didn't you stop him or her?" "Why are you telling me this?"
2. Don't say "Are you sure?"
3. Don't ask "Are you telling the truth?"
4. Don't say "Let me know if it happens again."
5. Avoid leading questions ("Did your uncle touch you too?" "Was he wearing a blue jacket?")

WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1-800-352-6513 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

For serious physical abuse or sexual abuse,
also contact the state police & local law enforcement.

Case Histories

(The following stories represent real-life situations in our community. Some identifying features and names have been changed to protect the families' privacy.)

ELLEN

Ellen entered kindergarten at Houston Elementary School as a “wild child.” She had no self-control and no idea how to play. She was aggressive to her peers and to adults. She lacked social skills. While school personnel were trying to determine the extent of Ellen’s problems, an older sister came to school one day, crying and bruised. She reported physical abuse by her mother. After an examination by the school nurse, the school contacted Child Protective Services and law enforcement who came to the school to talk with the children. An emergency petition was filed with the court and the children were taken into the state’s custody. It turns out that this mother had had two children taken from her previously because of severe abuse. Ellen and her sister were eventually placed into permanent foster care and the mother’s parental rights were terminated.

JOSHUA

Joshua started first grade at Adams Elementary School but left soon after. He returned to Adams in January to the same first grade classroom. His behavior in the regular classroom was so severely disruptive that an emergency meeting was held and he was placed in a Behavior Disorders program. He continually talked about folding boxes at a nearby pizza establishment. When asked why he did this, Joshua replied that he was given a pizza for folding boxes and that the pizza was supper for his little brother and sister and himself. The school contacted Child Protective Services. The CPS worker found the living conditions to be dire and filed a petition with the court. The children were placed into foster care and a CASA volunteer was assigned to the case. After a number of months passed and little progress was made, the parents finally began to respond to services offered. The CASA remained in touch with school personnel to check on Joshua’s progress. The family was eventually reunited. Joshua’s behavior improved — he longer felt responsible for “parenting” his siblings.

DESIREE

Desiree’s father died when she was 13. Due to frequent school truancy when Desiree was in 10th grade in River Cities High School, her mother spent several days in jail. Additional concerns about Desiree included poor hygiene and an unsafe home environment. A petition was filed and she was put into the legal custody of the state but remained in the physical custody of her mother. Over a year’s time, several agencies provided services to Desiree and her mother. Desiree is now 16 years old, her school attendance is excellent and her hygiene is good. She appears to be a happy, well-adjusted teenager and the staff in her school are pleased with her progress.

What Can Be Done to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse and neglect is a community problem and should be everyone's concern. Prevention is a community responsibility. You can help to strengthen families who are responsible for the well-being of their children. Every small effort can bring big rewards and will make a difference in the quality of life in your community. You can also:

- * Get involved.
- * Reach out to parents who are under stress. Help a friend, neighbor or relative who may be struggling with their parenting responsibilities.
- * Develop good communication with the children in your life.
- * Help yourself. Recognize the signs that indicate outside help is needed. If you feel overwhelmed, constantly sad, angry and out of control, get some help.
- * Support local abuse prevention efforts.
- * Vote.
- * Lend an encouraging word to a child.
- * Be a positive role model for your children and for other parents.
- * Do something today to help a child you may not know.
- * Volunteer your time for a community agency.
- * Report suspected abuse to appropriate local authorities.
- * Advocate for comprehensive services to help families and laws which protect children and promote healthy families.
- * Speak up for non-violent television programming.
- * Increase public awareness about the problem of child abuse.
- * Become a CASA volunteer.
- * Teach non-violent methods of conflict resolution.
- * **Join the TEAM for West Virginia Children.**

(Contributions are tax deductible. West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, W.Va., 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement.)

***Large streams from little fountains flow;
tall oaks from little acorns grow.***

— David Everett

Ten Reasons to Prevent Child Abuse

1. Child abuse can be fatal.
2. Child abuse stymies a child's normal growth and development. New brain research shows that the development of the brain in the first three years of life is directly affected by the kind of care babies and toddlers receive.
3. Child abuse is costly for many social institutions.
4. Child abuse costs continue to multiply over time.
5. Child abuse victims often repeat violent acts that they experienced on their own children.
6. Treatment services, while critical, are often ineffective in permanently altering parental behaviors.
7. Prevention programs targeted at parents before they become abusive or neglectful reduce the likelihood for future maltreatment.
8. Prevention programs targeted at children can improve a child's awareness of how best to avoid child abuse and other unsafe practices.
9. Child abuse prevention efforts serve as a way to combat other social problems of concern to the public and to policy makers.
10. Child abuse prevention creates a more compassionate society, one which places a high value on the welfare of children.

— From Prevent Child Abuse America

About TEAM for West Virginia Children

TEAM stands for “Together Eliminating Abuse and Maltreatment.” TEAM for West Virginia Children, a Huntington-based non-profit agency, formed in 1986, is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. A small paid staff is helped by many volunteers to conduct programs including:

Western Regional Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) project provides trained community volunteers (CASA), appointed by a Circuit Court judge, to advocate for the best interests of an abused or neglected child who has been placed in state custody. The CASA fully researches the situation and makes recommendations to the judge on services needed and permanent placement for the child. The goal is a safe, permanent, loving home for the child.

Public awareness campaigns: The TEAM provides both speakers and materials to promote child abuse prevention. Specific materials are available to help prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome and promoting safe infant sleep through the Our Babies: Safe & Sound Campaign. The TEAM has developed a Train the Trainer curriculum and a series of booklets on identifying and reporting child abuse for mandated reporters.

Mountain State Healthy Families: This project provides voluntary intensive home visitor services for first-time parents who face many challenges. The goal is to help the family get off to a good start by promoting parent-child interaction, providing child development information, and serving as a link to needed community resources.

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia (PCA-WV): This project is working to support safe and strong families through education, effective programs, and sound public policy. PCA-WV is a state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. Partners in Prevention is a statewide initiative of PCA-WV involving community teams around the state who are working to promote the well-being of children on a community level. PCA-WV is also leading efforts to build a network of Circle of Parents® mutual help support groups in West Virginia.

Partners in Community Outreach: This informal network of community-based In-Home Family Education programs around the state works together to build a statewide system of evidence-based early childhood home visiting programs that assures program quality and accountability - helping programs to improve child health; increase school readiness; enhance parenting skills and reduce child maltreatment.

To contact TEAM for West Virginia Children:

WEBSITES: <http://www.teamwv.org> <http://www.preventchildabusewv.org>
PHONE: (304) 523-9587 • FAX: (304) 523-9595
ADDRESS: P.O. Box 1653, Huntington, West Virginia 25717-1653
EMAIL: team@teamwv.org
Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/team4wvchildren>