Child Abuse and Neglect

Baltimore County Public Schools
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What constitutes abuse?
• The physical or mental injury of a child (under 18), under circumstances that indicate that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed.

By whom?
• Any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child or by a family member.

What is mental injury (abuse or neglect)?
• Mental injury, the observable, identifiable, and substantial impairment of a child’s mental or psychological ability to function caused by an act of a parent, caretaker, household, or family member.

What constitutes sexual abuse?
• Sexual abuse, Any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care, custody or responsibility or supervision of a child or by any household or family member, whether physical injuries are sustained or not. Child sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in: obscene photography, film, poses or similar activity; pornographic photography; prostitution; human trafficking; incest; rape; a sexual offense in any degree; sodomy; or an unnatural or perverted sexual practice.

What constitutes neglect?
• Includes the leaving of a child (under 8) unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care, custody, or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate the child’s health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk or that mental injury to the child or a substantial risk of mental injury may result.

The following are examples of child neglect that may be appropriate for referral to Baltimore County Department of Social Services (DSS), Child Protective Services (CPS):
1. Child left unattended or inadequately supervised for long periods of time, or with responsibilities beyond the child’s capacities.
2. Child showing signs of failure to thrive, that have not been explained by a medical condition, such as evidence that the child is receiving insufficient food.
3. Child not receiving essential medical, mental health, or dental treatment to the extent that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of harm.
4. Child wearing inappropriate clothing for the weather that creates risk to the child’s health. 5. Child living in a home where safety standards put the child’s health or welfare at substantial risk of harm.

Who investigates neglect?
• Neglect referrals are investigated by Baltimore County Department of Social Services. Situations which do not meet the criteria for acceptance as neglect may be referred to appropriate school resources (e.g., pupil personnel worker or school-based personnel such as school nurse, school counselor, school social worker, etc.).

Who has to report suspected abuse or neglect?
• any employee
• volunteer
• student teacher
• student intern

It is a state mandate that all employees, volunteers, student teachers, and student interns in Baltimore County Public Schools know of their responsibility to recognize and report suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, and mental injury. FOR ANY PERSON 18 YEARS OLD OR OVER, CONSULTATION FOR SITUATIONS INVOLVING ABUSE OR NEGLECT SHOULD BE SOUGHT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS).
What happens if I fail to make a report?
Anyone listed above who knowingly fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect is subject to suspension or dismissal and/or revocation of Maryland certificate issued by the Maryland State Department of Education and/or Maryland license to practice issued by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Am I protected if I do make a report?
Anyone listed above who, in good faith, participates in the making of a report or the investigation of child abuse or neglect, or in any judicial proceedings, is immune from any civil liability or criminal penalty. A good faith report is based upon honest beliefs, absence of malice, and no conscious attempt to falsify information.

GENERAL INFORMATION
• Consultation services/clarifications are available from Child Protective Services, Baltimore County Department of Social Services at 410-887-8463.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING
The procedures below are to be followed in suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect cases. ORAL

REPORT: (EACH INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT SHOULD BE REPORTED SEPARATELY.)
• Between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on business days, you shall orally report suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services, Baltimore County DSS (410-887-8463). After 4:30 you may call the after-hours service at 410-583-9398. The oral report must still be made to DSS the following day.
• In case of abuse, if unable to contact CPS/DSS, oral reports shall be made to the Baltimore County Police Department, Crimes Against Children Unit (410-853-3650).
• You may consult with administrators and student support staff to assist in this reporting process. Using this support system does not release you from your obligation to make sure the referral is completed as required.
• At the time an oral report is made, the referring person should have available the following information:
  - Name*
  - Address*
  - Description of Incident* Include, location, date and time
  - Telephone Number
  - Birth Date of Child, Grade*
  - If at all possible, names and schools of other known siblings
  - Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the parents/caretakers
  - Information needed for voice mail report
• For abuse reports made outside of business hours, call 911.
• Any doubt about reporting a suspected situation is to be resolved in favor of the child and the report made immediately.
• The local school principal should be informed that a case of suspected child abuse or neglect has been reported.

WRITTEN REPORT
The person making the oral report, whether to DSS or to the police, is also responsible for submitting a written report.
• A written report must follow the oral report within 48 hours of the contact which disclosed the existence of possible abuse or neglect.
• A copy of the written report shall be sent to each of the following: SCANNED REPORT:
  - The Family Services Division Screening Unit has been assigned a dedicated e-mail address for the purpose of receiving confidential written reports of child abuse and neglect. E-mails regarding child abuse and neglect are to be e-mailed to: dhr.baltimorecounty@maryland.gov. Contact the screening unit at 410-887-TIME (8463) prior to sending. The Screening Unit will be responsible for checking the e-mail throughout the day.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES LIAISON
The child protective services liaison (CPS Liaison) serves as a point of contact for all Child Protective Services/Police Department Investigative Personnel visits to the school. The CPS liaison is an identified member of the school-based Pupil Services Team who facilitates the interviews and subsequent services of a Baltimore County Department of Social Services’ CPS social worker and/or Baltimore County Police Department personnel following a report of child abuse or neglect. The liaison should be informed about any report initiated by staff.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL (BCPS Policy and Rule 4103)
If the suspected abuser/neglector is an employee, student teacher, or volunteer of Baltimore County Public Schools, the same reporting procedures are to be followed.
• Additionally, an Internal Incident Report Form must be completed immediately by the principal or office head in all cases of suspected child abuse and/or neglect following a limited inquiry by the principal or office head to determine the facts of the allegations.
• The incident form will be forwarded to:
  1. Baltimore County Department of Social Services
     Drumcastle Government Center
     6401 York Road Baltimore, MD 21212
     410-887-TIME (8463)
  2. State’s Attorney for Baltimore County
     (ABUSE REPORTS ONLY)
     401 Bosley Avenue Suite 511
     Towson, MD 21204
  3. Office of School Counseling Baltimore County Public Schools
     105 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Lower Level
     Towson, MD 21204
     443-809-0291
  4. School Principal

CONFIDENTIALITY
Child abuse and/or neglect reports and records shall not be placed in the student’s school record. All child abuse and/or neglect referrals or reports shall be kept in a separate file in the principal’s office until the time the student turns 24 years old.

INVESTIGATION
Baltimore County Public School employees, volunteers, student teachers, or student interns have an obligation to reasonably cooperate in child abuse and child neglect investigations.
• Failure to cooperate with the Department of Social Services and/or the Baltimore County Police Department will be considered misconduct in office.