

## **SOUTHERN OREGON HEAD START CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES**

**Every employee must read this policy prior to working for the program.  
An annual Child Abuse Training will be provided to center groups each program year.**

**As mandated reporters, you are obligated by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to DHS (Department of Human Services – Child Welfare). Each center has a manual entitled “RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE” which will further assist you in your reporting of any suspected cases.**

First and foremost, your responsibility is to protect each child from abuse and neglect.

If you have a “reasonable suspicion” of child abuse, you must make a DHS Child Welfare report AS SOON AS POSSIBLE and as early in the day as possible. By law, it must be made within 24 hours. The staff person that makes the observation or to whom the disclosure is given is the person who makes the call. A person failing to report suspected abuse, as required by law, may face criminal charges and/or a fine of \$1,000. Your report is kept confidential and your name remains anonymous. In rare cases, you could be asked in the future to testify. You may do so only if you have been subpoenaed.

You can make your report even if you are uncertain of the degree or reason for your suspicion. DHS Child Welfare intake workers are trained to screen these calls and can be a consultant during a time of ambivalence.

If you need to make a report, be sure to fill out the DHS Child Welfare REFERRAL FORM and make appropriate documentation of what took place. List the names of those involved, time, observations, and verbal quotes before making the call. You may consult with the Area Manager, Family Service Supervisor/DHS liaison. Get support!

If the police and/or DHS Child Welfare worker show up to conduct an investigation, and they need to interview a child on site, ask for identification and cooperate fully.

You may not discuss with or notify the parent(s) that Head Start or Early Head Start made a report. If a parent asks, “Did you call DHS?” you can respond, “We are mandated reporters by law. It is *possible* that someone at Head Start or Early Head Start could have made a call.” It is our policy that we are unable to discuss a case until after an investigation. At any time you feel you are in danger, notify the police by dialing 911. You are never expected to put yourself in a situation where there is a threat of harm. In some cases, for safety reasons, we may choose not to, at any time, tell the parent we made the DHS Child Welfare report.

Keep your DHS Child Welfare referral form until you have completed the follow-up after 5 days or when the assessment is completed. Mark the box that applies as to whether the case is going to be opened or closed, and document the assigned caseworker’s name if appropriate. Pass this information

on to the Area Manager, Family Advocate, if applicable, or EHS Specialist for further follow-up and case management. Send the original DHS Child Welfare referral form to the Family and Community Partnerships Supervisor/DHS Child Welfare liaison and keep a copy of the DHS Child Welfare referral form in a Confidential Envelope which you will place in the back of the child's paper file. The original report is kept in the main office with the FCP Supervisor for five years.

Parents will be informed, as they enter the program, of our policies, and that we are mandated reporters by law.

It is our philosophy, while abiding by the state statute and reporting suspected cases of child abuse to DHS Child Welfare, to provide the kinds of parent education that will improve parent/child relationships and promote healthy family environments. If there is no danger, we will provide support, assistance, and education to parents to promote growth after the investigation is complete.

As a preschool infant-and-toddler program and social service agency, we work to prevent cases of child abuse and neglect. This procedure focuses on the intervention process during a suspected case.