Child Abuse Reporting Procedure

POLICY/APPROACH:

As mandated reporters, all SOCFC employees are obligated by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services – Child Welfare (DHS CW).

Each center has a manual entitled “RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE” which will further assist you in reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

As they enter the program, parents are informed of our policies, our high regard for children's safety, and that we are mandated reporters.

This procedure focuses only on the reporting process during a suspected case of neglect or abuse.

Policy Council Approval 8/19/2014
Board Approval 8/21/2014

SOHS/EHS employees are subject to Oregon's Mandatory reporting Law. According to the law, any employee having reasonable cause to believe that any child has suffered abuse, or that any person with whom the employee comes in contact with has abused a child, shall report or cause a report to be made. The report is a request for an assessment into the condition of a child.

All newly hired staff receive training in accordance with State licensing laws. All staff receive annual training including agency child abuse policy and procedures. Policy Council and the Board of Directors receive training on the agency's approach to mandatory reporting and child abuse prevention during their orientation.

Parents are informed of the agency's child abuse policy at orientation, and in the parent handbook or calendar. We work together with parents in many ways to prevent child abuse and neglect. This procedure focuses only on the reporting process during a suspected case of neglect or abuse.

An interagency agreement between SOCFC and DHS Child Welfare (DHS CW) is updated annually and details the approaches and processes mutually agreed upon between the two agencies in support of the law and its implementation.
PROCEDURE:

- DHS Child Welfare reports must be made:
  - Within 24 hours
  - Even if you are uncertain of the degree or reason for your suspicion
- The staff person making the observation, or receiving the disclosure, is the person who makes the call.
  - Prior to the call the most current child abuse reporting form must be filled out, in detail. *see below
- A person failing to report suspected abuse, as required by law, may face criminal charges and/or a fine.
- Your personal identity is kept confidential, unless or until you are required to appear in court.
- Agency employees and records can only appear in court if subpoenaed.

COMPLETING THE FORM

- Use DHS Child Welfare Reporting Form located on our agency website or in your Child Abuse Reporting binder at your center (consult the Site Manager for binder location) to document the report.
- Fill out the front page completely before making a call to DHS Child Welfare. Complete the form with full details: list the names of those involved, time, observations, using specific quotes or actions before making the call. May also include prior concerns/observations that contribute to suspicion.
- Consult with the Site Manager, PFCE Department staff, or Family Advocate if support is needed.

AFTER MAKING THE REPORT

- If the police and/or DHS Child Welfare worker conduct an investigation at the center, and need to interview a child on site, ask for identification and cooperate fully.
- Process the DHS Child Welfare report form per instructions on the form
- Communicate the report information fully with the Site Manager, Family Advocate or HS Teacher/EHS Specialist for further follow-up and case management. Other team members may be informed of the report but may not need to know all the details
- Send all DHS Child Welfare report forms to the PFCE Supervisor/Department. Keep copies of the forms at the center in a Confidential Envelope, in the back of the child’s paper file.
- Do not notify the family that a DHS CW report has been made while the case is in investigation. If parents inquire, staff should respond that: “All Head Start / EHS employees are mandated reporters. It is possible that someone at Head Start or Early Head Start could have made a call.” It is part of our agreement with DHS CW that we do not discuss a case with the family until the investigation is complete. In certain cases, for safety reasons, we may not tell the parent at any time, who made the DHS Child Welfare report.
- If at any time you feel you are in danger, notify the police by dialing 911. Do not put yourself in a situation where there is a threat of harm.
Once the PFCE Supervisor receives the report, it will be reviewed for completion and will follow up with reporting staff if necessary. Reports are shared with the EHS/HS Directors. Information is collected and reported monthly to the department for accurate follow up. Reports are retained at the Main Office for five years.

Please see the Confidential Envelope Procedure and ORS 419B.035 Confidentiality of Records.