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**COMPONENT: ADMINISTRATION**

**SUBJECT: PREVENTION, IDENTIFICATION, AND REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:** To develop a plan for responding to suspected or known child abuse whether it occurs inside or outside the program.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

Highland Rim Head Start is required by law to act as a child-abuse and neglect reporting agency. All staff are required by Tennessee code Annotated §§ 37-1-403 and 37-1-605, to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children’s Services. All staff will be trained on how to identify and report child abuse or neglect. Head Start staff will not intervene or investigate cases of known or suspected child abuse or neglect. Head Start staff will fully co-operate with all agencies involved in an investigation of child abuse or neglect, in an effort to provide protection for children enrolled in the program.

Children will be supervised by **two staff** persons at all times. At no time will a staff person, volunteer, parent/guardian, etc. be left alone with a child.

All staff will be trained on how to prevent, identify, and report child abuse or neglect at a minimum of two times annually. Staff will sign off they have read and understand this policy after each training.

Head Start will provide annual orientation to parents/guardians concerning the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Parents/guardians will be provided information on the State Approved personal safety curriculum, currently known as “Keeping Kids Safe”.

All centers/classroom will have the number posted in a conspicuous place for reporting child abuse or neglect.

To make a report by phone regarding suspected abuse or neglect call **1-877-237-0004 or 1-877-542-2873.**

To make a report you may also visit the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services website at <https://reportabuse.state.tn.us/StartPage.aspx>, and follow the steps provided, print out confirmation page at the end of the report.

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family, but a closer look at the situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination. Staff should also take cultural differences into consideration.

### **Signs of Physical Abuse**

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents/guardians or caregivers, cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent/guardian or other adult caregiver:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes child in a negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has history of abuse as a child

### **Signs of Neglect**

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Beggars or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunization, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and/or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent/guardian and/or care giver:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Abusing drugs and/or alcohol

### **Signs of Sexual Abuse**

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuse to participate in physical activities
- Report nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Contracts sexually transmitted diseases

- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent/guardian and/or caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive or isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

### **Signs of Emotional Maltreatment**

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately acting as an adult (ex: parenting other children) or inappropriately infantile (ex: rocking or head banging)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted or talked about suicide
- Reports lack of attachment to the parent/guardian

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent/guardian and/or caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overly rejects the child

*Information listed above was provided from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families website:  
www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm*

Reporting Procedure is as follows:

1. Prior to calling the intake line, the reporting staff member is to complete the *Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Report Forms*.
2. The staff person that was disclosed to or witnessed the identified or suspected abuse or neglect is the person who must make the report. Staff are not to delegate or rely on another person to make the report. Staff are to call 1-877-237-004 or 1-877-542-2873 or make a report by visiting the website <https://reportabuse.state.tn.us/StartPage.aspx>.
3. After making the report to the state, make a copy of the completed form and place the copy in the child's file.
4. The staff person reporting should contact the Health Services Manager by phone to advise the Health Services Manager of the incident and forward the completed form in a sealed envelope marked confidential to the Health Services Manager.
5. If the parent/guardian contacts the center staff concerning the incident, the staff member will not discuss the incident with the parent/guardian, but will refer them to the Health Services Manager at central office.

When there are formal allegations regarding staff, the agency shall enter into a Safety Plan with the Department of Human Services regarding the individual's access to the agency and to children in the care of the agency. The alleged staff person or persons will be immediately removed from the classroom pending implementation of the Safety Plan.

See Personnel Policies for further clarification regarding Employee misconduct.

All *Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Forms* will be maintained at central office by the Health Services Manager and Director in a locked cabinet. The Health Services will share information when necessary with Family Services. All records will be maintained confidentially in a locked cabinet. The agency will co-operate with enforcement agencies and when possible work with abusing or neglecting parents/guardians or caretakers to provide support, counseling services, and to make any necessary referrals for services outside of the agency, as necessary.

Failure to comply with this policy and the severity of the incident will result in staff counseling, suspension without pay, or immediate termination.