OASC On-site Protection and Prevention Policies

OASC has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our students. These policies are primarily for the protection of the students; however, they also serve to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.

1. Avoid One-on-One Contact.

a. Adult to Student: Adult leaders should use extreme care in avoiding one-on-one encounters with students. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and students. If a student approaches you when you are alone, move quickly to an area where there are others or ask the student to meet you somewhere else (in a more public area) in a few minutes.

b. Student to Students: Care should also be taken to minimize one-on-one encounters between students.

2. Respect Students’ Privacy. Adult leaders must respect the privacy of students in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at workshop; and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must respect their own privacy in similar situations.

3. Constructive Discipline. Discipline used at workshop should be positive and constructive. Corporal punishment is not permitted. If behavioral problems escalate, involve another adult and follow OASC guidelines.

4. Hazing Prohibited. Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of workshop activity.

5. Student Responsibilities. All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set forth in the Workshop Guidelines. Physical violence, hazing, bullying, theft, verbal insults, and drugs and alcohol have no place at workshop and may result in the removal of a participant from workshop.

Responding to and Reporting Abuse

Follow advice from Jim Chavis School Social Worker Pittsburgh, PA:

-If a child discloses abuse to you “You want to keep your cool by not panicking or overreacting.

-Don't criticize the child. Be careful to avoid making him feel guilty by your very line of questioning such as, "Why didn't you tell me earlier?" "Why didn't you say no?" "Why didn't you do this or that?"

-Remember to respect the child's privacy. They're not going to feel comfortable discussing this in large groups with a lot of people milling around. Assure the child that he or she is not to blame, that they are the child, they are the victim, and that what was done to them is wrong and the abuser is the guilty party.

-And last, listen to the child carefully. Be patient. They'll eventually tell you what you need to know. Listen. And listen. And listen. And be supportive. Allow the child to thoroughly express whatever he or she wishes to. Get it all out as much as possible. But, unless you have had prior experience in interviewing sexually abused children, I recommend that people not try to elicit a lot more information than what is coming spontaneously. I think it's a good idea that after the conversation has ended to make a note or two on a piece of paper so that you've recorded what has happened. You've got documentation later if it's needed. And then proceed along Jim Chavis School Social Worker Pittsburgh, PA Dr. David Chadwick, M.D. (retired) Center for Child Protection San Diego Children's Hospital 6 with reporting procedures, leaving the detailed interviewing of the child to people who have been trained to do that. OASC staff is not to investigate.

A. For a child abused at workshop

1. If a person, including any member of the OASC staff or a advisor at workshop has cause to believe that a minor has been or may have been abused or neglected at the workshop, then that person shall immediately make a report, in accordance with Oklahoma Statute Title 10 Chapter 71 Section 7103.

2. If child abuse is suspected, the Workshop Director or his/her assistant, the Consultant, the OASC Director and the advisor, the principal, and the parents of the person involved must be informed at once. The person to whom the outcry was made contacts the Workshop Director who will make the additional contacts.

3. To the extent possible, the name of the informant should be kept confidential.

4. The child should be removed from ALL contact with the accused.

5. The Workshop Director or his/her assistant will confront the suspected child abuser.

6. Anytime an employee is speaking with a suspected victim or abuser, every effort must be made to have a same sex adult in the room. When confronting the suspected abuser, it is recommended that two adults be present.

7. Once the above-mentioned persons have reason to believe that any child abuse has or will occur, they shall report to the proper authorities.

8. The parents will be contacted to inform them of the situation.

B. For a child abused before coming to workshop

If a child is determined to be an abused child, either by observation or through confiding in an advisor, staff member, or other leader that he/she has been abused, the following steps should be taken:

1. The advisor or Director should counsel the child according to the guidelines set forth in “Helping a Victim of Child Abuse.” (See copy below)

2. The advisor or staff members should inform only the Workshop Director of the situation.

3. OASC staff should not investigate or question the child.

4. The person to whom the child revealed the possible abuse is the outcry witness.

5. If there is cause to believe that a minor has been or may have been abused or neglected as defined in the 10 O.S. 7103 and the abuse or neglect did not occur at the workshop, then that person shall immediately make a report to the Department of Human Services Abuse Hotline which may be contacted at 1-800-522-3511. If there is a concern that the child will be in immediate danger should he/she return home, then local law enforcement should be called.

Under Oklahoma Statute, every person, private citizen or professional who has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is being **abused** or neglected is mandated by law to promptly **report** suspected **abuse** to the **Oklahoma** Department of Human Services (DHS). **Failure** to do so is a misdemeanor.

6. The OASC Director should be informed that a report has been made

C. Helping a Victim of Child Abuse

After it has been disclosed that a child has been abused, certain steps should be taken to help the child.

1. Listen – don’t panic or overreact. Give the child permission to talk about the abuse to you. Listen carefully to everything the child says and note his or her behavior. Don’t fill in words for her/him. Don’t ask leading questions. Have another adult present when you talk to the child.

2. Believe – Never criticize the child or claim that the child has misunderstood what happened. Support the child for disclosing. It is not your responsibility to determine whether the allegation is true. Children seldom lie about abuse.

3. Protect – Along with the Workshop Director or other trusted adult, take the child to a private place. Discuss the situation only with these individuals. Try to avoid repeated interviews about the incident. Never promise that everything will be okay. You can promise that you will do what you can to help.

4. Affirm – Children who have been victimized may feel sad, angry, fearful, anxious, and depressed. Accept and understand the child’s feelings. Avoid telling the child how he or she “should feel.” Rather, emphasize that the child is not to blame for what happened. Praise him/her for courage and honesty and promise you will get help.

5. Refer – DO NOT attempt to handle the problem alone. This is important for the well-being of the child as well as for your own protection. As a child care custodian, you are mandated by the law to report child abuse.

Reporting Responsibilities

If you suspect abuse or a child discloses abuse to you, contact the Workshop Director if the abuse has occurred at workshop. In Oklahoma, you are also required to report your suspicions to the local authorities or the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. If the abuse occurred before workshop, call the local authorities or the Oklahoma Department of Human Services at 1-800-522-3511.

The reporting obligations under this Oklahoma Reporting law are individual, and no employer, supervisor or administrator shall impede or inhibit the reporting obligations of any employee or other person. No employer, supervisor or administrator of any employee or other person required to provide information pursuant to this section shall discharge, or in any manner discriminate or retaliate against, the employee or other person who in good faith provides such child abuse reports or information, testifies, or is about to testify in any proceeding involving child abuse or neglect; provided, that the person did not perpetrate or inflict such abuse or neglect. Any employer, supervisor or administrator who discharges, discriminates or retaliates against the employee or other person shall be liable for damages, costs and attorney fees. Internal procedures to facilitate child abuse or neglect reporting and inform employers, supervisors and administrators of reported suspected child abuse or neglect may be established provided that they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this section and that such procedures shall not relieve the employee or such other person from the individual reporting obligations required by this section.

Any person who knowingly and willfully fails to promptly report any incident as provided in this section may be reported by the Department of Human Services to local law enforcement for criminal investigation and, upon conviction thereof, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Reasonable Suspicion

For reporting child abuse, all the state requires is that you have reasonable suspicion that abuse occurred. And any person who has knowledge of physical or sexual abuse is required to report this to their local law enforcement agency or to the Department of Human Services. These reporters are protected civilly if their reports are based on factual information. When a report is received, an investigation will be carried out by the proper official agency. It is not the workshop staff’s responsibility to investigate these allegations.

The intention of this training is to create an environment in which both adults and children are aware of what constitutes abuse and are ready to stop it by recognizing it and reporting it to the proper authorities. We want you to care about the welfare of children and realize it is not up to you or OASC to investigate. We are to report to the proper authorities who are trained in that area. You don't have to make any decisions about it. All you have to have is reasonable suspicion.

Section Summary

You have completed this section of the course. In this section, you learned:

• If a child discloses to you that he or she has been abused, you should respond by remaining calm,

listening to the child, and reassuring the child that he or she is not to blame for the abuse. Then report the child's disclosure only to the proper authorities.

• If you suspect abuse or a child discloses abuse to you, contact the Workshop Director or his/her assistant if the abuse occurred at workshop. If the abuse occurred outside of workshop, call the Department of Human Services Abuse Hotline 1 (800) 522-3511or local authorities. Notify the Workshop Director that a report was made.

• The goal of this training is to create an environment in which both adults and children are prepared to recognize abuse and report it to the proper authorities, to ensure the safety of our students, and in which OASC are proactive in preventing abuse.