

A Mentor's Role in Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect or Other Safety Concerns

Individuals who work with children are often the first to see signs of child abuse or neglect, or the first to hear that a student's safety might be at risk. Sometimes the signs are visual, such as observing evidence of bruising or other injuries. Sometimes a student may say something that raises concern about abuse or neglect in the home or that the student – or someone else – may be at risk of harm.

While Power Lunch Reading Mentors are not considered mandated reporters under law, it is important that you know what to do if and when you suspect that a student may be in danger.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Below is a description of the major categories of child abuse and neglect along with examples and signs:

Mental/Emotional Injury: Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning

- Examples: threats, verbal abuse, excessive demands on performance
- Signs: continual self-deprecation, overreaction to mistakes

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical harm or threatened harm

Physical Assault: Physical contact without consent

- Examples: hitting, punching, kicking
- Signs: recurring bruises, behavioral extremes

Neglect: Failure to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education

- Examples: injury not being treated, not providing food at mealtime
- Signs: consistently poor hygiene, inappropriate dress for weather

Sexual Abuse: Sexual contact or penetration

Sexual Exploitation: Allowing for prostitution or depiction in a sexual act

Sexual Assault: Illegal sexual contact on someone incapable of consenting

- Examples: fondling genitals, penile/digital penetration, exposure to pornography
- Signs: sexualized behavior, mouth/genital lesions

OTHER SAFETY CONCERNS

In addition to child abuse and neglect, other issues that raise concerns about the safety of an individual are:

- Exposure to Domestic Violence
- Exposure to Drug-Related Activity
- Physical evidence of or statements regarding self-harm
- Evidence of bullying
- Verbal threats against another student or individual

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A STUDENT IS THE VICTIM OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT OR YOU HAVE CONCERNS FOR A STUDENT'S SAFETY?

If you believe that your Power Lunch student is – or has been – the victim of child abuse or neglect, or you have a concern for an individual's safety, immediately inform your school coordinator so that he or she can take appropriate steps.

- The School Coordinator will complete an EWDC Incident Report and to ensure we have a complete record of the concern raised.
- The School Coordinator will immediately inform both the appropriate school officials and the EWDC main office so that any necessary steps can be taken to protect the student or any other individual that may be at risk.