
REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

In accordance with COMAR 07.04.04, “an operator, staff member, substitute, volunteer, individual residing on the premises of the center, or anyone connected with the center may not subject a child to child abuse, neglect, or injurious treatment.” All persons named above will comply with the Agency’s written “Head Start Behavior Guidance Policy.” This policy is available to all persons connected with the center and is published in the Head Start of Washington County Parent Handbook.

Head Start performance standards require that the Executive Director designate a staff member who has responsibility for child abuse and neglect issues within the Agency. The staff member designated is the Developmental Services Manager. This staff member will assist all staff in making verbal and written reports to the proper agencies, as well as documenting such incidents in the family’s progress notes.

Staff will monitor all children daily for signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. At time of employment and thereafter on an annual basis, all staff will be instructed about their legal obligations to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Both staff and parents will be updated annually on the physical and behavioral indicators of abuse and neglect and will be given a copy of the Child Abuse and Neglect – Know Your Responsibility information card. Each telephone in the center will have posted the telephone numbers of the protective services unit of Department of Social Services and the police.

A staff member who has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected in the center or outside of the center shall report that belief directly to the protective services unit of the local Department of Social Services (240-420-2222) and notify the Developmental Services Manager of such action by completing the Report of Suspected Child Abuse and Injury Form . In the absence of the Developmental Services Manager, the form shall be forwarded to the Health Manager.

A verbal report shall be made as soon as possible with a written report (Form DHR/SSA 180) completed and mailed within 48 hours. Two copies of the report will be sent to the Department of Social Services. In cases of abuse only, a copy of the report will also be sent to the States Attorney’s Office.

All reports, verbal and written, are kept strictly confidential by the local Department of Social Services. The local department also recommends that staff do not share information about the report to the family involved.

There is no statute of limitations on reporting, meaning that reports can be made concerning incidents of suspected abuse or neglect that occurred one day ago or one year ago or longer.

Once a report is made and it is determined that the report be investigated, all information gathered by Child Protective Services is confidential and cannot be shared with anyone except under certain circumstances (COMAR .07.02.07.23). If an agency is involved in ongoing treatment and service to the family under investigation, a Multidisciplinary Team meeting may be requested to share information as it relates to coordination of ongoing services.