



*Oak  
Hill  
Camp*

Planting seeds that will grow.

POLICY ON CHILD ABUSE

## **IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CASEFINDING**

If children are identified when they show the earliest impact of their families' troubles, help can be made available at a stage when their problems can be more readily resolved. Most often, referrals to Protective Services are not made until the condition of neglect or abuse becomes acute and intolerable. These referrals may come too late to salvage the home.

## **OAK HILL CHRISTIAN SERVICE CAMP REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Suspected child abuse/neglect cases should be reported to the Camp Manager or Dean, who may request assistance from the reporting staff member or may elect not to have a case reported if there is clear information which indicates the complaint is invalid and if the complainant agrees. Consultation with Social Services is advisable in these situations.

The Camp Manager or Dean shall contact the Hanover County Department of Social Services between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at (804) 365-4100. After hours, the call shall be directed to the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-552-7096.

The reporter should give their name and phone number and be prepared to give the child's name, address, birth date, caretaker's name, alleged abuser's name and any other pertinent information requested. The complainant's name shall be confidential unless the court directs otherwise.

The Department of Social Services has the legal responsibility to receive and investigate suspected cases of abuse/neglect. The law gives the protective service workers authority to talk to the child and his siblings without parental permission, to photograph the child and to assume temporary custody of the child in instances where the child's life or health is in imminent danger. Social Services will make every effort to be readily accessible to the camp. Timely feedback will be given whenever possible.

Camp personnel shall fully cooperate with the Protective Service Worker in the detection and prevention of abuse/neglect. This cooperation includes permission for the social worker to interview the child at camp without the presence of camp personnel. If appropriate, the worker may request the presence of camp personnel.

## **INDICATORS OF A CHILD'S NEED FOR PROTECTION**

Some forms of abuse may not leave obvious physical evidence. There are, however, behavioral signs that may indicate victimization. You should be alert to these signs of abuse:

- Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearfulness, excessive crying and physical aggression.
- Nightmares, fear of going to bed or other sleep disturbances.
- Acting out inappropriate sexual activity or showing an unusual interest in sexual matters.
- Regression to infantile behavior.
- A fear of certain places, people or activities, especially being alone with certain people. Children should not be forced to give affection to an adult or teenager if they do not want to. A desire to avoid this may indicate a problem or may indicate that parents have cautioned the child against such behavior.
- Pain, itching, bleeding, fluid or rawness in the private areas.

You should note that some of these behaviors may have other explanations. A child who comes to summer camp is entering a strange environment and may experience homesickness or anxieties which can lead to behaviors such as these. Do not simply discount the behavior as homesickness, however. Immediately bring it to the attention of the Camp Manager or Dean. You are in a position to be a comfort and aid to the campers placed in your care. Even if the child's behavior is a result of homesickness, his or her camp experience will be much more enjoyable if the cause of the distress is addressed.

## KNOW THE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT LAW

### What Are The Legal Definitions Of Child Abuse And Neglect?

Section 63.2-100 of the *Code of Virginia* defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 years of age whose parent or any person responsible for his or her care\* (such as a child care provider, foster parent, or anyone responsible for the welfare of a child receiving residential care at an institution):

- Causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury;
- Has a child present during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a controlled substance or during the unlawful sale of such substance where such activity would constitute a felony violation;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care;
- Abandons the child;
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's age and level of development;
- Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender; or
- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

\*NOTE: Virginia law requires that mandated reporters report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services regardless of the abuser/neglector's relationship to the child.

### Liability of the Reporter

Section 63.2-1512 of the *Code of Virginia* protects a person, who either makes a CPS report or participates in a court hearing that results from a CPS report, from criminal and civil liability unless it is proven that the person acted with malicious intent.

### Penalty for Failure to Report

Mandated reporters who fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect, within 72 hours of first suspicion, can be charged with a misdemeanor. Section 63.2-1509 of the *Code of Virginia* provides penalties for failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If found guilty, the fine is up to \$500 for the first incident and from \$100 to \$1,000 for any subsequent incidents. All such incidents are referred to the local commonwealth's attorney.

## APPENDICES

A Guide for Mandated Reporters in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Virginia Code: § 63.2-1509. Physicians, nurses, teachers, etc., to report certain injuries to children; penalty for failure to report.

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