

Recognition, Reporting, and Prevention of Child Abuse

Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee

www.gsmidttn.org

Letter from the CEO: Agenia Clark

As Girl Scouts, we are charged in the Blue Book of Basic Documents to:
“...be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out so as to safeguard the health, safety, and general well-being of the participants.”

As a result of the National Child Protection Act of 1993 and Tennessee’s youth protection law, all youth-serving agencies are required to implement measures that minimize the risk of child abuse. To help develop a strategy for dealing with the law, the collaboration for Youth and Volunteerism was formed in Tennessee to discuss the impact of the legislation on the volunteers and children served by its member organizations.

The Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee has responded by developing this source book and training module for Girl Scout staff and volunteers. This resource was developed using the expertise of an intern generously provided through a grant from the HCA Foundation. By requiring training of all volunteers who work with girls, we hope to safeguard every girl member while also providing valuable information to adult volunteers who work with girls.

This resource focuses on recognizing, reporting, and preventing child abuse by offering examples and case studies, and by providing factual information about abuse and abusers. A listing of resources for further information is also provided.

We all know the importance of this issue to the health, safety, and security of our girl members. We hope this source book and training module will create an awareness of our responsibilities, and the confidence to be true advocates for all girls.

Sincerely,

Agenia Clark
CEO/President

Statistics on Child Abuse

National Figures on Child Abuse

In 2004, 3.5 million children were reported as victims of maltreatment, and it is estimated that 1,490 children died from abuse or neglect;

- ✓ 62.4% of the cases involved neglect
- ✓ 17.5% involved physical abuse
- ✓ 9.7% involved sexual abuse
- ✓ 7% involved emotional maltreatment
- ✓ 2.9% medically neglected
- ✓ 14.5% includes cases such as abandonment, treats of harm, congenital drug addiction and other situations which are not specified. Some children were victims of more than one type of abuse.

(Source: Child Help USA: www.childhelpusa.org, 2004)

Statewide figures on Child Abuse (current year not available)

In 1999, there were 32,788 reports of child abuse or neglect in Tennessee. Of these,

- ✓ 17,096 of the reported victims were girls
- ✓ 8,432 were victims of physical abuse
- ✓ 15,073 were victims of physical neglect
- ✓ 5,914 were victims of sexual abuse
- ✓ 1,144 were victims of emotional abuse or neglect
- ✓ 62 child deaths resulted from abuse or neglect

Who are the Perpetrators?

In 1999, more than 86% of the alleged perpetrators of child abuse and neglect in Tennessee were the parents or relatives of the victims. Staff of school, child care settings or institutions were reported to be the perpetrators in only 2% of the investigations. Parents who abuse or neglect their children may show several common characteristics. They seem to be isolated from the community and have few, if any, close friends. When asked about a child's injury, they offer conflicting reasons or no explanation at all. They seem unwilling or unable to provide for a child's basic physical needs. It is estimated that over 80% of all perpetrators were under age 40 and that almost two-thirds were females. An alarming 75% of all neglect and medical neglect cases associated with female perpetrators, while almost 75% of all sexual abuse cases were associated with male perpetrators. Adolescents as well as adults can be perpetrators of abuse.

Statistical Highlights

- ✓ 90 children were reported as abused or neglected every day in Tennessee
- ✓ 36% of all reports involved children 6 to 11 year of age
- ✓ 23% of all reports involved children 12 years of age or older
- ✓ 17,096 (52.1%) of alleged child victims were girls.
- ✓ 15,552 (47.4%) of alleged child victims were boys
- ✓ 43% of all child abuse/neglect victims, in which a precipitating event was identified, child protection services staff believed that the perpetrator's substance abuse contributed to the alleged child abuse and/or neglect.

(Statistics based on reports of child abuse and neglect in fiscal year 1999 in Tennessee)

Traits of a Molester

Who comes to mind when we think of a typical molester of children? Is it a complete stranger who abducts children? This is usually not a factual notion of who these molesters are. Eighty-eight percent of child abuse cases involve relatives or family friends who are the molester. Abuse is, in most cases, a developmental process that takes place over an extended period of time. Over time, the molester will become more and more intrusive. Sexual abuse could begin as innocently as a parent or relative playing with a child. Gradually, a game of tag could lead to other games that involve touching, which enables the molester to desensitize his or her victim. It is important to realize that the abuser who comes to mind when we generally think about child abuse is not the typical abuser. We must develop a clear sense of what child abuse is, how it manifests estimated that over 80% of all perpetrators were under age 40 and almost two-thirds were female.

Molester Strategies

Molesters utilize three main strategies to impose their will upon children. They are:

Seduction: with seduction, the molester knows the child. The molester begins the abuse with only slightly intrusive requests that gradually become more and more intrusive. When molesters use seduction they often incorporate the use of pornography to desensitize the child.

Tricking: This type of molester will lead children away from public areas with some sort of enticement. This enticement can come in many forms such as candy, magic tricks, etc. In these trickery cases, the molester's main goal is to isolate the child.

Force: In this case the molester is usually unknown to the child and therefore has to abduct the child. However, the use of force is not as common a strategy as seduction or trickery.

(Source: Boy Scouts of America)

Child Abuse

Child Abuse and Neglect occurs when a child is mistreated or denied the basic necessities for living, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.

Signs of Abuse or Neglect in Children:

- 1) They sustain repeat injuries that can't be well explained or are not treated.
- 2) They act in ways that are counter to their normal demeanor, ranging from disruptive and aggressive actions to being passive and withdrawn.
- 3) They assume the role of parent to their siblings and sometimes even to their parents.
- 4) Their sleep is interrupted by nightmares, bedwetting, fear of sleep, and the need for constant light in a room.
- 5) Their eating habits change and they begin to either lose their appetite or eat excessively
- 6) Their participation in school begins to change and grades begin to drop, often along with their participation in extracurricular activities.

Physical Abuse: Definition and Warning Signs

Physical Abuse is any act which, regardless of intent, results in a non accidental physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonably severe corporal punishment.

Signs of Physical Abuse

- 1) Bruises and Welts: bruises on child's back side, clustered bruises, human bite marks
- 2) Burns: cigarette burns, rope burns
- 3) Lacerations and Abrasions: on the lip, eye: absence of hair; jaw and nasal fractures
- 4) Child is unpleasant, demanding
- 5) Child is often late or absent from activities. When the child is present she comes early and leaves late in an attempt to avoid going home.
- 6) Wears long sleeves or clothes that conceal injuries.
- 7) Avoids physical contact with adults.
- 8) Seems afraid of parents.
- 9) Child's story about how the injuries occur is unbelievable.
- 10) The child shows little or no distress at being separated from parents.

Physical Neglect: Definition and Warning Signs

Physical Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to: abandonment; lack of supervision; life endangering physical hygiene; lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve; lack of shelter; or lack of medical or dental care that results in health threatening conditions.

Signs of Neglect

- 1) Falling asleep during activities
- 2) Chronic hunger and tiredness
- 3) Begging or stealing other children's lunches
- 4) Collecting leftovers after meals
- 5) Coming to school early and staying late
- 6) Dull, apathetic appearance
- 7) Squinting
- 8) Engaging in vandalism
- 9) Use of drugs or alcohol
- 10) Engaging in sexual misconduct

Emotional Abuse: Definition and Warning Signs

Emotional Abuse includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference, or constant family conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker.

Signs of Emotional Abuse

- 1) Unpleasant attitude
- 2) Hard to get along with
- 3) Demanding
- 4) Frequently causes trouble
- 5) Will not leave other alone
- 6) Unusually shy
- 7) Avoids others
- 8) Too anxious to please
- 9) Too submissive
- 10) Puts up with unkind words or actions without protest

Sexual Abuse: Definition and Warning Signs

Sexual Abuse involves acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may consist of a single incident or many acts of abuse over a long period of time. The nature of sexual abuse, the shame of the child victim, and the possible involvement of trusted parents, step-parents, or other persons in a caretaker role make it extremely difficult for children to come forward to report sexual abuse.

Behavior of Sexually Abused Children

- 1) Unusual interest in or avoidance of all things of a sexual nature
- 2) Sleep problems
- 3) Depression or withdrawal from friends and family
- 4) Seductiveness
- 5) Statements that their bodies are dirty or damaged
- 6) Refusal to go to school or delinquency

- 7) Secretiveness
- 8) Aspects of sexual molestation in drawings, games, fantasies
- 9) Unusual aggressiveness
- 10) Suicidal behavior

Common Traits of Normal Sexual Development

- ✓ Playing doctor/playing house
- ✓ Curiosity about genitals and gender difference
- ✓ Bathroom humor
- ✓ Masturbation
- ✓ Wondering about sex and reproduction

(Source: OUR KIDS, Inc., American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry)

Reluctance to Report Suspected cases of Abuse

The most common reason given for not reporting suspected cases of abuse is that the prospective reporter is ignorant of the signs of abuse and does not know what to do with the suspicion.

People also tend to believe that reporting will have negative effects upon the family and the child. However, a consumer satisfaction survey of parents who had been investigated by child protective services revealed that a substantial majority rated the caseworkers “positively.” Seventy-three percent believed the quality of services was “excellent” or “good” and seventy-two percent felt their family was better off as a result of the intervention, according to Fryer, Bross, Krugman, Denson, & Baird 1990.

Reports of abuse received by case workers are not automatically perceived as substantiated; the percentages vary between 30% and 36%. Reports that go unsubstantiated are believed to have been made in good faith and are not seen as pranks but merely concern for the best interests of the child.

Reporting Suspected Cases of Abuse

Reporting Child Abuse

The child abuse law states that the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) is mandated to investigate all reported incidents of abuse. Anyone having knowledge or suspicion of abuse can call either DCS, juvenile court, or your local police department. DCS will report all abuse cases to the district attorney. All reporting of child abuse is strictly confidential. All reports of abuse must be investigated by at least two people within 24 hours of receiving the report. All investigations must be completed within 60 days.

When reporting a suspected case of abuse, DCS, the police, or juvenile court will need certain information:

- ✓ The child’s parent’s names

- ✓ Child's accurate address and phone number
- ✓ Children's names and ages
- ✓ Enough information to investigate

To report a case of suspected abuse in Tennessee, call (615)532-3545 or the 24-hour hotline at 1-877-237-0004.

Other information about Reporting

Usually, a DCS counselor will begin to investigating by talking with the child. Then the counselor will talk with others to find out more information about whether the child needs immediate protection. The counselor may have the child examined by the child's physician or may speak with the child's physician.

Any person who reports a suspected case of abuse can choose to remain anonymous. If the person reporting that case chooses this option, the family of the victim does not have the right to be told who made the report. And the information gathered by DCS cannot be shared with other unless it is for the good of the child or the family.

If the report is substantiated, DCS will contact the local police. The police, along with the district attorney's office, will make the final decision about whether or not to make an arrest.

Child Abuse Prevention

Ways to Prevent Child Abuse

- 1) Report suspected abuse or neglect.
- 2) Advocate for services that help families. Services that deal with the issues of parenting, health care, and housing needs are all of importance.
- 3) Help a friend, neighbor, or relative who is struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities.
- 4) Help yourself by recognizing that you feel overwhelmed, sad, angry, or out of control
- 5) Volunteer at a local child abuse program.
- 6) Support and suggest programs on child abuse prevention sponsored by local organizations.

(Source: Nations Committee to Prevent Child Abuse)

Utilize the Girl Scout' Contemporary Issues Preventing Child Abuse: "Staying Safe" curriculum by implementing a suggested activity form the booklet with your troop.

Additional Resources

Tennessee Department of Children's Services
Child Protective Services-8th Floor
436 Sixth Ave. North
Nashville, TN 37243
(615)532-5624

Centerstone Community Mental Health Centers
1101 6th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37208
(615)460-4357

National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse
332 S. Michigan Ave. Suite 1250
Chicago, Illinois 60604-4357
(312)663-3520

Prevent Child Abuse America
200 South Michigan Ave., 17th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-2404
(312)663-3520

OUR KIDS, Inc.
Provides medical and psychological evaluations
for suspected child abuse victims.
1900 Hayes Street
Nashville, TN 37203
(615)862-4211

Child Abuse Prevention of Tennessee
333 Gallatin Pike South
Nashville, TN 37206
(615)868-4468

Child Abuse Prevention Center
139 Thompson Lane
Nashville, TN 37211
(615)333-2644

Parents Suggested Reading form the National Resource Center on Child Abuse

Adams, Caren and Fay, Jennifer. (1979). *No More Secrets: Protecting Your Child From Sexual Assault*. San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact Publishers.

Daugherty, Lynn. (1984). *Why Me? Help for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse (Even if They Are Adults Now)* . WI: Mother Courage Press.

Hagans, Kathryn B. and Case, Joyce. (1988). *When Your Child Has Been Molested: A Parents Guild to Healing and Recovery*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Girl Scout Recommended Reading List for Children

Children, Doc Low. *Heart Smarts: Teenage Guide for the Puzzle of Life*. Boulder Creek, CA: Planetary Publications, 1991.

Dayee, Frances. *Private Zone*. Edmonds, Washington: The Chas. Franklin Press, 1982.

Janice, Judith. *It's Not Your Fault*, Edmonds, Washington: The Chas. Franklin Press, 1985.

National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse. *Amazing Spider-Man and Power Pack*. New York: Marval Comics Group, 1984.

Wachter, Oralea. *No More Secrets for Me*. Boston: Little, Brown Com., 1983.

Resources for this Source Book

Fryer, G.E., Bross, D.C., Krugman, R.D., Denson, D.B. & Baird, D. (1990). "Good News for CPS Workers" *Public Welfare*, Winter, 39-41.

Wiese, Davis and Deborah Daro. (1985). *Current Trends In Child Abuse reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1994 Annual Fifty States Survey*. Chicago: National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.

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National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20447
(800)FYI-3366
(703)385-7565
E-Mail: nccanch@calib.com

All other statistics and definitions not referenced are based upon information obtained through the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.