A resource for Troop Leaders, staff and volunteers that describes potential signs of child abuse and where to report. Reporting child abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility

Voices for Children Advocacy Center

Serving Genesee & Shiawassee Counties



Tips for Troop Leaders

Kids are Counting on Adults and Mentors to Protect Them

This means YOU! This resource is for any adult who talks to or sees a child – whether virtually, via phone or from a safe social distance (perhaps while making a contact-free drop off of materials).

This resource discusses potential signs of child abuse and neglect and where to report if you suspect something is wrong.

In times of crisis and economic instability child abuse and neglect rates increase. However, reports of child abuse and neglect in Michigan have declined since March. This is because fewer adults outside the household have eyes on children.

Girl Scouts are not going to school, activities, places of worship, after school programs or other public places where adults look out for their safety and well-being or where they can disclose. You may be meeting online, instead.

Trust Your Gut

If something does not look safe, sound safe, or feel safe; **Report.**

Making a Report Call is Just Checking in on the Wellbeing of a Child

When you make a report, you are checking on the wellbeing of the child. **You remain anonymous and you do not need proof.**

You May Be the Only Person to Act

If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe - **Report.** Anonymous reports are accepted from anyone. Anyone making a report *in good faith* is protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action. Your identity is held confidential and will not be revealed.

Open-ended Questions to ask Girl Scouts

- How have you been feeling? What do you need?
- What did you have for (last mealtime)?
- What is the best thing that has happened this week?
- Has anything happened this week that you didn't like?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me/I should know?

Helpful Tips for Protecting Children

Physical Abuse

- Child may appear frightened of the caregiver (flinches or shies away. Watch body language).
- Child has burns, bites, broken bones, bruising, black eyes or complaints of pain.
- Caregiver offers no explanation for a child's injury; the parent blames the child's behavior or personality for the injury. Ask yourself, *"Does the story match what I asked?"*

Sexual Abuse

- Child attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment.
- Demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for their age.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Witnessing an adult inappropriately touching a child, watching pornography with a child or saying sexual things to a child.

Emotional Abuse

- Child shows extremes in behavior: overly aggressive or compliant.
- Appears emotionally unattached to caregiver and others.
- Caregiver constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child and refuses to help the child when needed.

Neglect

- Child begs for, or steals, food, has severe poor hygiene or states no one at home provides care. (Have they lost weight?)
- Witnessing a child using alcohol or other drugs.
- Highly stressful family situations and /or adults in home abusing alcohol or other drugs.
- Unlocked weapons or guns in the home.

Where to Report

24-hours/ 7 days a week

Child Abuse/ Neglect Hotline

1-855-444-3911

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911

Free child abuse or neglect reporting trainings at MDHHS. For more information visit Voices for Children's website.

Adapted from Kids First Missouri & Prevent Child Abuse Missouri's Document Resource