

UME Volunteers help provide a safe and inclusive environment for youth and should serve as advocates to help protect youth from suspected child abuse and neglect. Maryland state law and University policy require all adults to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Therefore, if a volunteer witnesses or is told about child abuse or neglect, they are required to report to their local program coordinator and the appropriate authorities. Below you will find information regarding child abuse law, signs, and reporting requirements applicable to you as a UME Volunteer.

### **Child Abuse & Neglect**

Child **ABUSE** is *physical or mental injury or any act of sexual molestation or exploitation of a child under age 18.*

Child **NEGLECT** is *failure to give proper care and attention to a child under age 18, including leaving a child unattended.*

### **A child may be abused or neglected by any:**

- parent,
- person who cares for, has custody of, or is responsible for supervising a child, or
- household or family member.

### **Child abuse or neglect exists when circumstances indicate:**

- that a child's physical or mental health or welfare is being harmed,
- a child is at substantial risk of being harmed or,
- there is sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.

### **Signs of Child Abuse & Neglect**

#### ***Physical Abuse Include (not an exhaustive list):***

- unexplained bruises: or a pattern of bruises
- cuts and burns to the body
- rope marks or burns
- fractures/broken bones
- welts, abrasions
- bite marks or puncture wounds

#### ***Signs of Sexual Abuse Include (not an exhaustive list):***

- injury/reported pain/ itching in genital area
- sexual knowledge or behavior inappropriate for child's age.
- verbalization of sexual involvement or victimization
- sexually inappropriate and/or suggestive behavior
- difficulty sitting or walking

#### ***Signs of Neglect Include (not an exhaustive list)***

- pattern of poor hygiene
- untreated serious medical problems
- obvious malnourishment
- child left unattended or without supervision
- inadequate clothing for weather
- child has a pattern of exhibiting withdrawn, shy, sad, or fatigued behavior in addition to one or more of the indicators noted above.

**Volunteers are required to report child abuse or neglect when:**

- You observe acts of child abuse or neglect,
- You observe signs of child abuse or neglect even if you did not witness the acts,
- You are told of child abuse or neglect by another person who has direct knowledge,
- You are told directly by a victim of child abuse or neglect, regardless of age, or
- You are told of past abuse by an adult survivor.

**Immediately contact your supervising Extension employee if you observe any person physically or sexually abusing a child.** You must report other non-emergency situations within 48 hours of learning of the abuse or neglect.

**Do not conduct your own investigation.** Listen to what has been disclosed to you and report the information/observations when you become aware of it.

**How to Report:**

1. Immediately notify your supervising Extension employee
2. In consultation with your supervising Extension employee,
  - a. **Notify the local Police** (if child is in imminent danger or abuse is happening at current event)
  - b. **Contact Child Protective Services (CPS)**
  - c. **Prepare a written report** to be sent to the Chief of Police and Child Protective Services within 48 hours that includes, if known:
    - Name and age of the victim when the incident occurred, identity (name) of the alleged abuser and the relationship to the child, and details related to the alleged abuse or maltreatment.

**Confidentiality:** Volunteers are required to maintain confidentiality for any and all medical, financial, insurance and other personal information they are told or that is shared with them during the performance of their duties. Volunteers may be sanctioned/terminated for failure to protect or the unauthorized use of personal information. Information contained in reports and records associated with child abuse/neglect is highly sensitive and must be protected as confidential. Limit information sharing only to those who have a legitimate need to know. Do not share information with a suspected or potential abuser, which may include a parent or guardian.

**Protection:** Any individual who in good faith makes or participates in making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is immune from civil liability or criminal prosecution and is protected from any institutional reprisal that might otherwise result from compliance with the reporting laws or policies. Any individual who fails to report suspected child abuse may be subject to disciplinary action.

<p><b>UME Volunteer Taskforce</b> UME Volunteers As Youth Advocates Author: Jamie Morris (2019) Reviewed by: Stephanie Pully, UME Volunteer Taskforce and UME ADO (2020)</p>	<p>Published: 3/3/2021</p>
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