



Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey

Child Abuse Symptoms, Reporting, and Responding To Disclosure

Child abuse affects more than one million children each year in the United States. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment, and physical neglect are four common types of abuse. **See *Safety-Wise*, 2000, pg. 41-42 for Basic Safety Guidelines regarding Child Abuse.**

Symptoms and Signs of Abuse

Many abused children show some of the following symptoms: low self-esteem; anger; guilt; aggressive, hyperactive, or disruptive behavior; withdrawal; delinquent behavior; poor school performance; and abuse of drugs and alcohol. The Contemporary Issues for Girl Scouts booklet *Staying Safe: Preventing Child Abuse* contains more specific signs for each type of abuse.

Some possible signs of abuse are:

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures
- Excessive fearfulness or distrust of adults
- Abusive behavior toward other children, especially younger ones
- Avoidance of physical contact

In New Jersey, any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse should immediately report this information to the State Central Registry (SCR). If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 as well as 1-877 NJ ABUSE. A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of child abuse and can make the report anonymously.

What information will I be asked to provide to the hotline screener?

SCR screeners are trained caseworkers who know how to respond to reports of child abuse/neglect. Whenever possible, a caller should provide all of the following information:

- **Who:** The child and parent/caregiver's name, age and address and the name of the alleged perpetrator and that person's relationship to the child.
- **What:** Type and frequency of alleged abuse/neglect, current or previous injuries to the child and what caused you to become concerned.
- **When:** When the alleged abuse/neglect occurred and when you learned of it.
- **Where:** Where the incident occurred, where the child is now and whether the alleged perpetrator has access to the child.
- **How:** How urgent the need is for intervention and whether there is a likelihood of imminent danger for the child.

Do callers have immunity from civil or criminal liability?

Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of child abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. Calls can be placed to the hotline anonymously.

Is it against the laws of New Jersey to fail to report suspected abuse/neglect?

Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect according to the law or to comply with the provisions of the law is a disorderly person and subject to a fine of up to \$1000 or up to six months imprisonment, or both.

What happens after I make the call?

When a report indicates that a child may be at risk, an investigator from the Division of Youth and Family Services will promptly investigate the allegations of child abuse and neglect within 24 hours of receipt of the report.

Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge² for All Girl Scouts (Revised for 2009)

- I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number(s), parent's or guardians' work address/telephone number(s), and the name and location of my school without the permission of my parent or guardian.
- I will tell an adult right away if I come across or receive any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- I will always follow the rules of Internet sites, including those rules that are based on age of use, parental approval and knowledge, and public laws.
- I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents or guardians. If my parents or guardian agree to a meeting, I will arrange it in a public place and bring a parent or guardian along.
- I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parent or guardian.
- I will talk with my parent or guardian so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide on the time of day that I can be online, the length of time that I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
- I will not use the Internet to collect money for Girl Scout products, and I will follow all safety guidelines related to Girl Scout product sales.
- I will practice online "netiquette" (good manners) at all times when online.
 - I won't spam others.
 - I will not bully nor will I tolerate bullying (and I will always tell a trusted adult if this is a problem).
 - I won't use bad language.
- I will be guided by the Girl Scout Promise and Law in all that I do online.

Signed,

Girl Name _____ Date _____

Parent or Guardian _____ Date _____

² The GSUSA Online Safety Pledge is based upon the Online Safety Pledge developed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.missingkids.com).