



Building Bridges For Children's Mental Health

Behavioral Health Facts and Classroom Tips*

For use with Positive Behavior Supports & Response to Intervention

Mandated Reporting for School Professionals

Regarding suspected child abuse or neglect

Symptoms or Behaviors

- Aggression or withdrawal
- Speech delays
- Poor coordination
- Low self-esteem
- Clingy or isolated
- Below level academic performance
- Learning disorders

Possible Educational Implications

Comprehensive training for school staff is available on recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

Watch for:

- Crying or sleeping in class
- Physical discomfort
- Tardy or truant behavior
- Self-deprecating talk
- Concern about making family contact
- Self-medication through substance use

Information for Parents & Teachers

All mental health concerns are treatable. More progress can be made by a coordinated partnership between school and home. It is recommended that with family consent, all community partners involved with the family work together.

Child abuse occurs at every socio-economic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions, and at all levels of education

Nationally:

- A report of child abuse is made every 10 seconds in America
- 80% of young adults who had been abused met the diagnostic criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder by the age of 21 (including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, & post-traumatic stress disorder)

In Colorado:

- Boys and girls are equally likely to be abused or neglected.
- Approximately 80% of child abuse is perpetrated by a parent or caregiver.
- Children under the age of 4 account for 75% of all child abuse deaths.
- Neglect occurs more frequently than abuse and can be equally damaging and deadly. 30% of all child fatalities are due to neglect.

National statistics taken from ChildHelp (www.childhelp.org/resources/learning-center/statistics). Colorado statistics taken from Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies (CAFCA).

Investigation is the job of child protective services or law enforcement.

- Immediately inform your administrator or his/her designee of your concerns.
- Immediately make a report or cause a report to be made to the Child Protective Services Unit.
- Merely reporting your suspicion to other school personnel does not satisfy this legal responsibility.
- Both verbal and written reports are required. Become familiar with your school reporting policy.
- Please see "Preventing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect" at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/pichildabuse.htm>

As an educator, you are legally responsible to make certain that the report is made to your local Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division.

Reporting suspected emotional, physical, or sexual abuse is your legal responsibility.

Support from family, school, friends, and peers can be an important part of recovery. With sensitivity and support, you can help a child lead a healthy and productive life.

Questions? Request an in-service at your school

This fact sheet is not to be used for the purpose of making a diagnosis. It is to be used only as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of behaviors and mental health issues you may encounter in your classroom.

* Behavioral Health refers to mental health and substance use disorders



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Pro-Active Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

If a child discloses to you, DO:

- Remain calm and have someone continually present.
- Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone.
- Remember any concrete information.
- Reassure your support for him/her.
- Inform them of the law to report abuse to someone who has helped children and families in similar situations.
- Report the incident to the proper authorities immediately.

If a child discloses to you, DO NOT:

- Promise confidentiality.
- Express panic or shock in reaction or expression.
- Ask questions, dig for detail, or investigate.
- Make negative comments about the perpetrator.
- Disclose the information indiscriminately. Tell only those who need the information to protect the child
- Make judgments.
- Rush or interrupt the child.

In the Classroom:

- Provide a sense of security.
- Communicate at eye level and acknowledge that the issue is available and accessible during down times in the classroom.
- Create structure:
 - Provide limits and clear direction to create a sense of parameter and safety.
 - Identify and reassure the child's strengths, individual talents and qualities that make them who they are.
- Provide consistency:
 - Establish routines and clear expectations. Report any inappropriate behavior immediately.

Home School Connection:

- Be sensitive and do not make assumptions –you are reporting a suspicion, not making an accusation.
- If requested by the family, offer any available school resources for support.
- Offer an encouraging note home of student progress.
- Your student may be experiencing a change in living situations, which may impact sleep patterns, mood, and attentiveness.

Resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway, www.childwelfare.gov, *Information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families*

Colorado County Child Abuse Hotlines, www.childabuse.org/report%20abuse.html

Colorado Department of Education: Child Abuse and Prevention, www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/nurChild_Abuse.pdf

Colorado Department of Education: Fast Facts, www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-EBP_MH_ADHD.pdf

Colorado Department of Education Prevention Initiatives Unit, www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/pchildabuse.htm

Colorado Division of Behavioral Health, www.cdhs.state.co.us/dmh, *Resource for mental health for all citizens of Colorado*

Colorado Division of Child Welfare, www.cdhs.state.co.us/childwelfare

Colorado Regulations regarding child welfare, [http://stateboard.cdhs.state.co.us:8008/CDHS/rule_volumes\\$.Volume7s](http://stateboard.cdhs.state.co.us:8008/CDHS/rule_volumes$.Volume7s)

Empower Colorado, <http://www.empowercolorado.com/>

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health ~ Colorado Chapter, <http://www.coloradofederation.org/>

National Association of School Psychologists: Reports and Fact Sheets, www.nasponline.org/advocacy/researchresources.aspx

National Institute on Drug Abuse, <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/index.php>

Parent Education and Assistance for Kids (PEAK), www.peakparent.org

Preventing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: Guidance for School Personnel, http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/download/pdf/child_abuse_manual_2002.pdf

Talking with Kids about Tough Issues, www.talkingwithkids.org