Reporting Suspected Neglect or Abuse

Our goal in administering this training is to help all OSG adults create an environment that prevents child abuse. We also want them prepared to report it (immediately) if and when it is detected. Again, we have an absolute responsibility to advocate for the safety of our youth.

Those people who are required by state or local law to report any and all suspicions of child abuse are known as mandatory reporters. Different states have different guidelines regarding who is or isn't a mandatory reporter, and you should become familiar with your own state's guidelines for this.

In most states, medical providers, lawyers, and teachers are considered to be mandatory reporters.

In many states, people dealing with youths in other settings (e.g., sports teams, scouting organizations) are also considered to be mandatory reporters.

Whether or not you're a mandatory reporter by law, we hope that the guidelines presented here, when taken in tandem with the Scout Law, will encourage you to consider yourself one.

In considering your role as a reporter, it's useful to know and understand the following:

1. All reasonable suspicions of abuse must be reported. Again: the safety and well-being of the child must be our primary concern and is more important than our own discomfort or anxiety about being a reporter.
2. When an OSG member reports suspected child abuse in good faith, it does not constitute an actual allegation of abuse. In other words, you're not accusing the potential abuser of a crime; you're simply reporting your observations to authorities. They, in turn, have the training to evaluate more fully.
3. If you report suspected abuse, you may ask for your name to be kept confidential, i.e., you may give an anonymous report.
4. If you report suspected abuse and no abuse is found, you will not be in "trouble." The authorities who work to safeguard children would also rather have a suspicion be reported and found innocent than to have an actual abuse situation be unreported. The "Good Samaritan" doctrine protects those making good faith reports from personal liability under those states with "authorized immunity" clauses.

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