

Reporting Child Abuse

1404 N. Ash St., Spokane, WA 99201

(509) 747-8091

www.gsewni.org

What To Do When You Suspect Abuse

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is the maltreatment of a child by an older person. It includes three categories defined by the laws: **1) Child neglect; 2) Child abuse; and 3) Child sexual abuse.** Two distinctions are made within these categories; **acts of omission and acts of commission.** **Acts of omission** include the **withholding** of those things deemed necessary for normal accommodation, i.e. food, shelter, affection, clothing, etc. **Child neglect** is an **act of omission.** Children may experience both physical and/or emotional neglect. Examples of neglect might include children who consistently wear clothes inappropriate for the weather, i.e. sandals in winter, no mittens, etc.; a child who may obviously need medical attention, but has been given none; or a child that received medication inconsistently. When examining for neglect, look at the overall quality of care of the child: food, clothing, grooming, health, etc. **Neglect would not include** a child who is without troop/group dues or permission slips.

Acts of commission are overt acts that injure or assault the child and may even result in death. **Child abuse** (both physical and emotional) and **child sexual abuse** are acts of commission. They include the intentional, and sometimes unintentional, bruising, burning, breaking of bones, name-calling, bullying or degrading of a child by an older person.

When/How to Report Child Abuse

1. Any volunteer who has reason to believe that a girl member is being neglected, physically abused or sexually abused, will immediately report that information to the local child protection office.
2. The volunteer will then contact the Chief Operating Officer of GSEWNI. This notification is made as part of the overall Risk Management plan for our council.

Suspected child abuse is a confidential matter. Reporters **should not** discuss their suspicions with their service unit members, other leaders, other Girl Scout volunteers, their neighbor, the local nurse, school teacher, relative or **anyone** other than those identified above. Applicable Washington and Idaho law is designed to protect the child, the family, and the individual who makes a report in good faith. Anyone making false statements without due cause may be prosecuted. When you report to the designated source, you are covered by a good faith clause; when you discuss the situation inappropriately, you are not protected.

3. The Child Protection Office is not required to tell you the outcome of an investigation. Because of confidentiality and privacy laws, Child Protection is limited to what information it can tell you or others working with the child. Be assured that each county has experience in these areas and will notify everyone they need to inform.

What Are Some Reporting Issues to Consider?

- 1. Confidentiality and good faith...**the identity of a person making a report to child protection is confidential information. Under Washington and Idaho law, a good faith clause protects the reporter when the allegations are found to be invalid, as long as the report was made in good faith and not maliciously.
- 2. Child Removed from Home...**in cases of a suspected child sexual abuse, the child may be removed from the home to a safe setting. This is not done to punish or blame the child, but to protect her from possible recurrence of abuse. In physical abuse cases, children may also be removed when it is believed their lives might be in danger.

Regional Reporting Hotlines

Washington State: 1-866-ENDHARM (1-866-363-4276), Washington State's toll-free, 24 hour, 7 day-a-week hotline that will connect you directly to the appropriate local office to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Idaho State: Statewide: 1-855-552-KIDS (5437)