

# Child Abuse & Neglect Policy

## **GENERAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

Head Start works with families to prevent child abuse and neglect and to provide support and act as an advocate for families needing assistance.

## **DEFINITION**

- ◆ Any physical injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation given of the injury - ORS 418.750
- ◆ Neglect that could cause actual harm or substantial risk of harm to child's health, welfare or safety.
- ◆ Mental injury, which is harm to a child's ability to think, reason, or have feelings and has a harmful effect on a child, which can be observed.
- ◆ Sexual molestation
- ◆ Threat of harm, which includes all activities, conditions and persons which places the child at substantial risk of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, or mental injury.

## **REFERRAL AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Head Start employees are required by law to immediately report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect to DHS (Department of Human Services) Child Welfare and/or the local law enforcement agency (LEA). The employee suspecting such abuse or neglect will first make a report to the Family Advocate (FA) at his/her center and then call DHS Child Welfare and/or LEA. If the FA is not available, the Site Supervisor may be contacted if the occurrence is at Riverside, otherwise the Family Services Coordinator or the Director should be contacted. It is advised that the call be made in the presence of the FA, the Family Services Coordinator or the Director. The employee reporting the suspected abuse or neglect will fill out appropriate program forms. A copy of the report form will be forwarded to the Family Services Coordinator. Head Start staff is not allowed by law to contact the child's family regarding this report. After the investigation is completed, staff may discuss the report with the family if it is best practice to do so. This should be done only with the knowledge of the Family Advocate or Site Supervisor.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

The Head Start Program will provide an orientation for all staff on the identification and reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect each program year. The Family Services Coordinator will provide this training for new staff at an orientation in August. The appropriate FA will orient any new staff hired during the school year and will document such orientation in the employee's file.

## **PARENT EDUCATION**

The Child Abuse and Neglect Policy will be given to all parents at Parent Orientation. The policy will be discussed with parents at the time they receive it. Head Start parents will be offered training on the prevention of abuse and neglect and will be informed of available community resources.

## **AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

The Head Start program will work to establish and maintain cooperative relationships with the agencies providing child protective services to the community.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All contacts with the family and the agency receiving the report will be documented and placed in a separate file. At the end of the DHS Child Welfare investigation, the information shall be transferred to the family file. Confidentiality of all records will be maintained. The Child Abuse and Neglect Policy will be reviewed annually by the Health and Social Services Advisory Committee, updated as necessary, and presented for approval by the Policy Council.