


ACT 126
The PA Child Protective
Services Law

Mandated Reporting for School Employees

MODULE 2

Definitions of Child Abuse



Definitions of Child Abuse

Five Categories of Child Abuse:

1. Serious Physical Injury
2. Serious Mental Injury
3. Sexual Abuse or Exploitation
4. Serious Physical Neglect
5. Imminent Risk

1. Serious Physical Injury

As defined by the CPSL:

Must be Recent - The statute of limitations of reporting it to *ChildLine* is within 2 years of when the abuse occurred; can refer to GPS if it is beyond the 2 years.

The act or failure to act causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age, including

- Severe pain; OR
- Significantly impairs a child's functioning, either temporarily or permanently

Indicators of Serious Physical Injury

- Unexplained bruises
- Human bite marks
- Cigarette burns
- Immersion burns
- Signs of strangulation
- Pattern marks
- Cut marks

2. Serious Mental Injury

As defined by the CPSL:

Serious Mental Injury is a psychological condition that is diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist that:

- renders the child chronically and severely anxious, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that his/her safety is threatened, or
- seriously interferes with the child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Indicators of Serious Mental Injury

- Depression
- Mental or emotional developmental delays
- Self-mutilation or self-injurious behaviors
- Suicide attempts
- Compulsive behaviors
- Antisocial behaviors
- Delinquent behaviors
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Neurotic traits

3. Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

May include physical and non-physical abuse:

- Engaging a child in sexually explicit conduct
- Assisting others in sexually abusing a child
- Videotaping, photographing, filming or computer depicting sexually explicit conduct
- Rape, sexual assault, etc. of children

Physical Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Injury to the genitals
- STDs
- Recurring bladder or urinary tract infections
- Suspicious stains, bleeding or soreness in the genital area
- Painful bowel movements
- Pregnancy

Behavioral Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Verbal disclosure
- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge for age
- Layered or inappropriate clothing
- Hiding clothing
- Lack of interest or involvement in activities

4. Serious Physical Neglect

As defined by the CPSL:

Persistent and prolonged failure to meet the physical needs of a child

- Endangers the child's life or development, OR
- Impairs the child's functioning
- Arises from repeated or prolonged lack of supervision, OR
- Failure to provide the essentials of life

Indicators of Physical Neglect

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| • Failure to thrive | • Positive toxicology |
| • Delays in physical development | • Consistent lack of supervision |
| • Persistent hunger | • Chronic truancy |
| • Speech disorders | • Unattended physical or medical needs |
| • Poor hygiene | • Abandonment |
| • Inappropriate dress | |

5. Imminent Risk

As defined by the CPSL:

Any recent act, within 2 years, failure to act, or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

Something WOULD have happened if it not had been for

- Happenstance
- Third party intervention
- Actions of the child

If not by these interventions the injury would have been serious and it would have caused the child severe pain; or significantly impaired the child's physical functioning.

Imminent Risk Limitations

Imminent Risk is limited to:

- A child under 18 years of age
- Incidents which occur within two years of the date of the report;
- Non-accidental serious physical injury as defined by CPSL;
- Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation in the CPSL; and
- Perpetrators as defined by the CPSL.

Check your understanding

Please answer the following true or false statements:

1. Signs of physical injury can include bruises, burns, and human bite marks.
-- True or False?
2. If a child exhibits promiscuous or provocative behavior, s/he is exhibiting signs of serious mental injury.
-- True or False?

Check your understanding

3. Sexual abuse and exploitation can be considered both physical and non-physical abuse.

-- *True or False?*

4. Imminent risk takes into account things such as happenstance, the intervention of a third party and/or the action of a child.

-- *True or False?*
