This orientation is intended to be used in a group setting such as volunteer leader training or as an individual online orientation for volunteers. It is required for 4-H contacts and office chairs.
Recognizing Child Abuse: What You Should Know
The first step in helping abused children is learning to recognize the symptoms of child abuse. Although child abuse is divided into four types - physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment - the types are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, often is emotionally maltreated as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected. Any child at any age may experience any of the types of child abuse. Children older than age 5 are more likely to be physically abused and to suffer moderate injury than are children under age 5.
Experienced educators likely have seen all forms of child abuse at one time or another. They are alert to signs such as these that may signal the presence of child abuse.

**The child:**
- Shows sudden changes in behavior
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, an overachiever or too responsible
- Comes to school early, stays late and does not want to go home
Experienced educators likely have seen all forms of child abuse at one time or another. They are alert to signs such as these that may signal the presence of child abuse.

**The parent:**
- Shows little concern for the child, rarely responding to the school's requests for information, conferences or home visits
- Denies the existence of - or blames the child for - the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks the classroom teacher to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless or burdensome
- Demands perfection or a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention and satisfaction of emotional needs
Experienced educators likely have seen all forms of child abuse at one time or another. They are alert to signs such as these that may signal the presence of child abuse.

**The parent and child:**
- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship entirely negative
- State that they do not like each other

None of these signs proves that child abuse is present in a family. Any of them may be found in any parent or child at one time or another. When these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, they should cause the educator to take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse. That second look may reveal further signs of abuse or signs of a particular kind of child abuse.
Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:
• Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
• Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
• Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home from school
• Shrinks at the approach of adults
• Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

• Is frequently absent from school and activities
• Begs or steals food or money from peers
• Lacks needed medical or dental care
• Is consistently dirty
• Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
• Abuses alcohol or other drugs
• States that no one is at home to provide care
Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

• Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity or aggression
• Is inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example);
• Is delayed in physical or emotional development
• Has attempted suicide
• Reports a lack of attachment to the parent
How to Report
Reports of suspicion of child maltreatment are made to county social services offices. Report by phone or in writing. The phone number is listed in the telephone directory. If an emergency situation exists or social services cannot be reached, report to local law enforcement officials. If unsure whether to make a report, call a child protection social worker to discuss the matter.

When reporting, the following information is needed: name, age, gender of the child and other family members, address, phone number, directions to the child’s home, description of the maltreatment and current condition of the child. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

Within 48 hours of an oral report, a written statement may be requested. The statement may be submitted by: Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (Form J) or a form available from the county social services office or letter.
For more information on recognizing child abuse, visit Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota at [www.pcand.org/](http://www.pcand.org/).
Who reports?
All adults have the ethical obligation to report suspected child neglect and abuse or the suspicion that a child may be in danger of being abused or neglected.

**Mandatory reporters** (required to report according to North Dakota law)
- Reporters mandated by state law are all paid Extension staff, as well as most medical staff, school professionals, teachers and administrators, counselors, social workers, child-care workers, law enforcement officers and clergy.
  Mandated reporters who suspect child abuse or neglect and fail to report that suspicion can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.

**Permissive reporters** (allowed to report) - Permissive reporters include anyone not mandated to report who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused or neglected.
What happens to a report?
A report of suspected abuse or neglect is only a request for an assessment of suspected child abuse or neglect. The assessment and decision of whether services are required for the protection and treatment of an abused or neglected child are the responsibility of the child protection service social workers.

The report helps child protection workers decide if services are required for the protection and treatment of an abused or neglected child and what further steps may be necessary. Whenever possible, North Dakota Child Protection Services tries to maintain the integrity of the family.
**North Dakota Child Abuse Information Index**

When the assessment of a report calls for a decision that services are required, the reports are filed in the North Dakota Child Abuse Information Index. Reports remain on the index for 10 years and are available only to people who have authorization to see the reports for the purposes of the well-being of children.

Information in the index is confidential. Unauthorized release of any information from the index can result in being charged with a class B misdemeanor.

People who are authorized to access confidential information used with the NDSU Extension Service Youth Protection Policy are designated Extension Service paid staff or Extension Service volunteer personnel committee members who work directly with the policy. All people who have access to this information within the Extension Service shall sign a
confidentiality statement (Form H).
Liability
Any person making a report in good faith is immune from criminal and civil liability. However, if mandated people fail to report, they can be charged with a class B misdemeanor (up to $500 fine and 30 days imprisonment). Any person who willfully makes a false report or provides false information that causes a report to be made can be charged with a class B misdemeanor. However, if the false report is made to a law enforcement official, the person who causes the false report to be made can be charged with a class A misdemeanor (up to $1,000 fine and one year imprisonment). A person who willfully makes a false report or willfully provides false information that causes a report to be made also is liable in a civil action for all damages suffered by the person reported.

Unauthorized disclosure
Any person who permits or encourages the unauthorized disclosure of reports made or confidential information obtained can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.
Suspension
If the reported incident involves a program volunteer or paid staff member, the responsible Extension administrator shall, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children. Reinstatement of a volunteer or paid staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the responsible Extension administrator and the investigating agency.
Reporting Child Maltreatment Within Extension Youth Programs or Involving Paid Extension Staff

1. Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect is a professional and mandatory legal obligation for paid staff. In North Dakota, paid staff failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect can be charged with a class B misdemeanor.
   - Volunteers shall report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately to the county department of social services or law enforcement authorities. If suspected abuse occurs within or as part of an NDSU Extension Service youth program, a paid Extension employee shall be notified first to address program issues needed to keep all children safe.
   - If paid staff are suspect, a member of the Extension Service administrative staff shall be notified.

2. Extension paid staff will be familiar with and follow the reporting procedure prescribed by the local and North Dakota law as outlined in this policy.
3. The designated Extension staff person receiving a report is responsible for documenting the facts as reported but not responsible for any investigation. Appropriate Extension administrators also shall be informed as soon as the information is received.

4. If the reported incident involves a program volunteer or paid staff member, the responsible Extension administrator shall, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children. Reinstatement of a volunteer or paid staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the responsible Extension administrator and the investigating agency.

5. Regardless of where or under what circumstances the alleged incident takes place, if a paid staff person is involved, it will be considered job-related and affecting job performance.
6. Paid and volunteer staff must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information on suspected child abuse or neglect. Involved paid and volunteer staff are to discuss matters pertaining to abuse and suspected abuse only with the appropriate Extension representatives.

7. Paid and volunteer staff may not contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) of children if they are involved in an alleged child abuse incident without the permission of appropriate Extension administrators.
Recognizing Child Abuse

References
Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org

Prevent Child Abuse America
228 S. Wabash Ave., 10th Floor
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www.preventchildabuse.org