Mandated Reporting in Education: Getting Through the Gray

Tara M. Dahlager
Augsburg College

Follow this and additional works at: https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd
Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation
https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd/219

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Idun. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Graduate Projects by an authorized administrator of Idun. For more information, please contact bloomber@augsburg.edu.
Mandated Reporting in Education: Getting Through the Gray

Tara M. Dahlgren

1999
Mandated Reporting in Education: Getting Through the Gray

Tara M. Dahlgard

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Social Work

Augsburg College
Minneapolis, Minnesota

1999
Abstract

Mandated Reporting in Education: Getting Through the Gray
Tara M. Dhlager
1999

Educators play a critical role in the mandated reporting of child abuse for the school is one of the few institutions where we can find almost every child for a good portion of their lives. If educators are expected to be effective mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, it would make sense that they should receive intense training on the subject. A review of the literature indicates that this is not happening. The purpose of this research was to identify whether educators in a midsize school district are qualified to make decisions regarding the mandated reporting of child maltreatment. A questionnaire was distributed to 500 educators at the elementary level. The questionnaire consisted of 8 vignettes describing hypothetical situations where behaviors ranged from acceptable parental behavior and corporal punishment to child maltreatment. The participants were asked to identify the intervention/s they would use in each situation. This same questionnaire was distributed to 10 child protection workers, asking them to select the intervention/s they would expect educators to use. The answers were then compared to see, if in fact, there was congruence. Data provided by 182 elementary educators and 5 child protection workers indicated that levels of congruency were inconsistent. Although educators and child protection workers seemed to select similar interventions in the area of possible physical abuse, they seemed to differ in areas of possible emotional abuse and/or neglect, especially in decisions to contact parents or report to the child protection unit. Although there were incongruencies among selected interventions, both agencies indicated a need for educators to receive further training in the area of child maltreatment.
Table of Contents

Dedication........................................................................................................... II
Acknowledgements............................................................................................ iii
List of Tables....................................................................................................... iv

Chapter I- Introduction...................................................................................... 1

Chapter II- Review of Literature....................................................................... 4
  Definitions of Abuse......................................................................................... 4
  Guidelines for Mandated Reporting............................................................... 8
  Educators as Mandated Reporters................................................................. 11
  Are professionals fulfilling their duties as mandated reporters?... 12

Chapter III- Theoretical Framework................................................................. 13
  Theory of Advocacy......................................................................................... 13
  Theory of Empowerment............................................................................... 15

Chapter IV- Methodology.................................................................................. 19
  Defining Concepts, Variables, Units of Analysis........................................... 19
  Study Population and Sampling................................................................... 20
  Measurement Issues...................................................................................... 21
  Instrumentation and Data Collection........................................................... 22
  Protection of Human Subjects................................................................. 23

Chapter V- Findings.......................................................................................... 25
  Quantitative Analysis.................................................................................... 25
  Qualitative Analysis..................................................................................... 42

Chapter VI- Discussion and Conclusion........................................................... 47
  Findings......................................................................................................... 47
  Strengths and Limitations............................................................................ 51
  Implications for Social Work Practice......................................................... 52
  Implications for Social Work Research...................................................... 53
  Conclusion.................................................................................................... 53

References.......................................................................................................... 55
Appendices.......................................................................................................... 57
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all children who are weathering the storms of child abuse and neglect and to those mandated reporters who might help them find their way to sunnier times.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation for those who helped me through the trials and tribulations of this thesis project. My thesis advisor, Dr. Clarice Staff, has given me much guidance and motivation along the way. During a time when stress and confusion were at a high, her calm demeanor and insight helped me to find the direction I needed and the confidence to get through the struggle. I would also like to acknowledge my husband. His limitless support and patience has helped me tremendously. His belief in me, and my abilities to meet the challenges I faced this past year, has helped me to continue believing in myself.

I would also like to acknowledge those professionals who assisted me in the actual study. The Superintendent supported this research from the start and I am grateful to him for that. I received a great response from the educators in the district. The additional feedback they gave helped to increase the richness of the study. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the child protection unit in this district for supporting the research and also for supplying information that aided in creating the scenarios.
List of Tables

Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.</td>
<td>Job titles of educators.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.</td>
<td>Experience of educators.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.</td>
<td>Comparison between information received and the # of years experience.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.</td>
<td>Educators receiving information but no training on the guidelines.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.</td>
<td>Educators reporting to Child Protection by the # of years experience.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.</td>
<td>Comparison between educators who have received information and those who chose to report to Child Protection.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7.</td>
<td>Comparison between job title and the perceived need for a training by a Child Protection worker.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8.</td>
<td>Comparison between job title and the ability to be an effective reporter.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9.</td>
<td>Comparison between # of years experience and the ability to be an effective reporter.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1-Introduction

Imagine that you are a ten year old child. You are in the kitchen, pouring yourself a glass of milk, when your father walks in. He trips over a kitchen chair and proceeds to yell and swear and knock the chair over. He smells of alcohol once again. Being afraid of your father, you drop the milk and it spills all over the floor. This action escalates your father’s anger. He swears, calls you a name, and hits you across the face several times, leaving a bruise under your right eye. What is going to happen to your father as a result of using so much force and causing physical injury to you? If it is 1999, it would be considered child abuse. If the circumstances surrounding your injury should become known to any mandated reporter, it would most likely be reported to the local child welfare agency or police department, leading to a possible investigation of child abuse. Unfortunately, incidences of child abuse are not always easily identified. There are numerous variables that come into play in deciphering between what is or is not in the best interest of the child to report.

Although incidences of child abuse were first noted in 1946, it was not considered unlawful until 1974, when the U.S. Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. The purpose of the act, evident in its title, was to prevent and treat acts of child abuse. The National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect was created in order to carry out this purpose. Its role was to define what constitutes abuse and neglect, to develop a model for a child protection agency, to create guidelines for mandated reporting, and to determine how child abuse cases would be addressed once they were substantiated (Hutchinson, 1993). Although the roles seemed to have been carried out, and there are existing policies that address these issue of child
maltreatment, there still seems to be a general consensus that the laws, policies, definitions and guidelines are unclear. Kalichman and Brosig (1992) refer to the reporting statutes as vague and imprecise. Also, mandated reporting laws are often "expansive," making it difficult for reporters to determine what is or is not reportable (Deisz, Doueck, & George, 1996, p.275).

Children of abuse spend a substantial part of their lives in an educational setting. It would make sense then, that educators are often the ones who act as mandated reporters, and are forced to distinguish between what is and what is not a reportable offense. It is difficult enough to make these kinds of decisions when you have had extensive training in the area of child abuse, let alone being an educator who most likely has had very little training.

The purpose of this research is to identify if educators, specifically those working within the midsize urban school, are qualified to make decisions regarding the mandated reporting of child abuse. This study will also help to determine if there is congruence between what educators view as reportable, and what child protection believes educators should or should not be reporting. The potential significance of this study is to have educators, along with the help of the child protection unit, receive more extensive training if the results indicate that there is a need.

This research project is based on the hypothesis that if mandated reporters received proper training on the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child maltreatment, then they would have a greater chance of determining the most effective interventions to use in advocating for abused children, according to law. In researching this hypothesis further, this researcher will focus on
educators as mandated reporters and will address these research questions:
1). Are educators able to distinguish between what is and what is not a
reportable offense of possible child abuse and/or abuse? 2). Is there
congruence between what is reported, as determined by educators, and what
child protection expects them to be reporting? 3). Are educators in need of
more extensive training in order to be more effective in their role as mandated
reporters?
Chapter II-Review of Literature

The review of the literature focuses on the definitions of abuse and the guidelines for mandated reporting. It also examines to see if professionals are fulfilling their duties as mandated reporters.

Definitions of Child Abuse

There does not seem to be one universal definition of child abuse. Rather, the definitions seem to be dependent upon who is writing the article, which states or countries are being referred to in the articles, and to the time period in which the article is being written.

Federal legislation on child abuse was passed on January 31, 1974 (Public Law 93-247). It was a decision that paved the way for enhancing the rights of children. This law defined child abuse as "any physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened" (Erickson, McEvoy & Colucci, 1984, p.18). The definition of child abuse, as defined in the article written by Theisen (1978), identified child abuse as simply "non accidental physical injury" (p.415).

As the notion of child abuse continued to be explored, it again took on meanings that included additional types of abuse. Becker-Laussen et al (1995) use the definition of child abuse as "the violation of trust and boundaries, perpetrated by adults charged with protecting a child... including physical and sexual abuse, punishment, neglect, and negative home atmosphere" (p. 564).
This definition is abstract, especially in its use of terms such as "punishment" and "negative home atmosphere." It leaves much room for discretion on the part of mandated reporters. It also does not seem to require any evidence of physical or emotional injury. Unlike other definitions, it does make it clear that the perpetrator must be an adult.

Whipple and Richey (1997) use a definition of child abuse that includes emotional abuse as well. It is defined as "the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child’s welfare, under the circumstances which indicate that the child’s health and welfare is harmed or threatened..." (p. 431). This is the same definition created by federal law back in 1974. A definition of child abuse such as this, also leaves room for much interpretation. What one mandated reporter may view as negligent treatment may not be the same as another mandated reporter. Along the same lines, one mandated reporter may interpret a child as being harmed or threatened, whereas another may think that the child’s safety is not being jeopardized and therefore choose not to make a report.

The policy of the "Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors," adopted by the State of Minnesota, has included physical abuse (including emotional), sexual abuse and neglect in its definition of child maltreatment. As defined in the state-level policy, physical abuse refers to "any physical or mental injury or threatened injury, inflicted by a person responsible for the child’s care on a child other than by accidental means, or any physical mental injury that cannot be reasonably explained by the child’s history of injuries" (Minnesota Statute 626.556, 1995, p. 2). Sexual abuse refers to "the subjection of a child by a person responsible for the child’s care, by a person who has a significant
relationship to the child, or by a person in a position of authority. It also includes threatened sexual abuse" (Minnesota Statute 626.556, 1995, p.1).

Finally, neglect is defined as "failure by a person responsible for a child's care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical care when reasonably able to do so, or failure to take steps to ensure that a child is educated in accordance with state law" (Minnesota Statute 626.556, 1995, p. 1).

The terms of child maltreatment, as defined in the policy, provide a great deal of information for mandated reporters to have to interpret. In looking at this definition of neglect, the term "necessary" is used. This term seems to be relative. What one person may view as necessary may be different than another. This also holds true for the term "accidental." In looking at the concept of "person of authority," does that only include adults, or could it include an older sibling or babysitter who is taking care of the child? There also seems to be a gray area with respect to education. Does ensuring that a child is educated include buying your child glasses in order to see better if able to do so? Could it include making sure that the child has ample time and support in getting his/her homework done, or making sure that the child has enough sleep so that he/she is not falling asleep in school? The list could go on and on, but the point made is that using one's discretion in interpreting these areas can be difficult.

Although the definition of physical abuse is laid out in the law, as well as in the definitions provided by the other authors, the actual guidelines for determining if a specific behavior fits the category of physical abuse is unclear. For instance, it is difficult to draw the lines that distinguish what constitutes physical discipline and what constitutes actual abuse. Whipple and Richey
(1997) attempt to differentiate between parental behaviors that are considered "very severe violence" and those that are considered "harsh parenting."

Parental behaviors that were severe in nature included kicking, biting, beating up, burning, scalding, and using a weapon or threatening to use a weapon such as a knife or gun. These behaviors resulted in injuries such as bruises, cuts, burns, or broken bones and sometimes death.

Parental behaviors that were "harsh" in nature included yelling, spanking, shoving, or hitting the child with an object, and did not result in a labeling of physical abuse. The harsh behaviors may be considered a lesser form of abuse, sometimes referred to as "sub abusive violence...used to describe socially acceptable violence toward children for purposes of discipline, and includes slapping, spanking, hitting children (i.e., using a flat wooden or other object)" (Whipple and Richey, 1997, p. 439).

By categorizing parental behavior in this manner, the definition of "abusive behavior" seems more clear. However, this definition does not cover all of the potential issues. What if a child happens to bruise easily? Would spanking then become abuse? Or just the opposite, what if a child does not injure easily? Is a behavior such as hitting your child with a wooden spoon okay just to the point that you produce an injury, no matter how long it has occurred?

Again, the lines can be hard to draw, especially in the case of "corporal punishment." Corporal punishment involves using violence as a means of physical discipline and would probably fit under the category of sub-abusive violence, even though some incidences might seem very harsh in nature. In the United States, corporal punishment is considered a lawful form of punishment and is often supported by laws, culture, education, religion and the
According to Hay and Jones (1994), many of the physical abuse cases reported and unreported involve corporal punishment. If this is the case, it would seem that the link between abuse and corporal punishment is very strong and that one might easily cross over the lines whether the intent was there or not. It would also seem that if child maltreatment is to be prevented, more research needs to be done on the effects of corporal punishment in relation to abuse, and perhaps mandates need to be established that discourage severe forms of corporal punishment.

Emotional abuse is thought to be the most prevalent form of child abuse existing today. It exists in the form of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, or corrupting (Davis, 1996). Although this definition provides us with some examples of abuse, it is not clear if it is realistic. It does not provide a limit to these behaviors. It doesn't seem enough to say that these behaviors alone are abusive. Although many parents have demonstrated some of these behaviors at times, not all would be categorized as abusive parents. Other variables would have to be considered, such as how often it occurred and to what degree it was carried out.

**Guidelines for Mandated Reporting**

Mandated reporters are required to report any information that they receive that might suggest or allege any of these forms of child abuse. A mandated reporter then is "a professional who is engaged in the practice of the healing arts, social services, hospital administration, psychological or psychiatric treatment, child care, education, law enforcement, or a member of the clergy receiving information of maltreatment while engaged in ministerial duties" (Minnesota Statute 626.556, 1995, pg 3). The policy points out that a
mandated reporter is required to report if he/she knows or has reason to believe that abuse has occurred. It provides a clear list of people who are required to report. It does not state, however, whether a mandated reporter continues to be a mandated reporter when off the clock.

In their study of the effects of statutory requirements on child maltreatment reporting, Kalichman and Brosig (1992) include a comparison between the states of Pennsylvania and Colorado. Pennsylvania’s statute describes mandated reporters as "professionals who in the course of their practice of their profession come into contact with children and have reason to believe, on the basis of their training and experience, that a child coming before them is a victim of child abuse..." (p. 285). Colorado’s statute describes a mandated reporter as "any professional who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions which would reasonably result in abuse..." (p. 285). In looking at Minnesota’s statute, a mandated reporter is “a person who knows or has reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years “(Minnesota Statute 626.556, p.3).

Unlike the statutes existing in Minnesota and Colorado, Pennsylvania’s statute clearly states that a mandated reporter is only obligated to report while acting out his/her role as a professional. Pennsylvania’s statute also includes the notion that one is to make their decision based on their training and experience. It seems that more research has to be done to determine how much training, if any, these professionals are receiving.

It would seem that one might get confused with the term "professional." A social worker or a teacher would fit under this category and be expected to
report. However, what about bus drivers or accountants? They may consider themselves professionals, however, does the category of mandated reporters apply here? Minnesota’s statute provides a guideline that is more clearly defined, for it provides more detailed information on who should be reporting.

Each of the statutes mentioned above include a guideline that requires a standard of “reasonable cause to suspect.” Mahoney (1996) speaks of this “reasonable cause” in his article. He is concerned that the reporting laws fail to clearly define when a suspicion or belief becomes reasonable. The laws also fail to define what constitutes signs of child maltreatment. Because of this, mandated reporters often have to rely on their own discretion when deciding whether or not to report. Deisz et al., (1996) express a concern that reports that are based on this standard often result in overreporting. The problem with overreporting lies in the fact that when child protection workers are forced to screen and/or investigate the reports made in ignorance, or error on the side of caution, they are not able to respond effectively to those genuine cases that need to be a priority (Winefield & Bradley, 1992). If this continues to be the case, it would then make sense that funding for additional positions in child protection needs to increase.

For those who base their decisions on this standard, and also interpret the policy as requiring physical evidence, a pattern of underreporting can occur as well. Because of the uncertainties over the definition of abuse, and/or the fears that reporters have in regards to jeopardizing their client/s or their relationships with the parents of the victims, there is a tendency towards a hesitancy to report (Winefield & Bradley, 1992). It is reasonable to conclude that both underreporting and overreporting can be detrimental to the safety of children.
Educators as Mandated Reporters

The National Study of the Incidence and Severity of Child Abuse and Neglect determined that 51% of the reports made to Child Protection agencies came from community agencies, with the biggest proportion coming from professionals working in the education system (Ards & Harrell, 1992). Mahoney (1996) focuses on the importance of educators in respect to the reporting of and prevention of child maltreatment. In fact, it is stated that "the educational system has the potential to be the linch-pin of community-based efforts to protect children from maltreatment" (Mahoney, 1996, p. 227). It would make sense then that educators would be critical players in the mandated reporting of abuse, for the school is one of the few institutions where we can find almost every child for a good portion of their lives as children.

Erickson et al (1984) refer to educators as being the "front line troops." They indicate that schools are not effective enough in their role as mandated reporters, protecting children from harm. Many educators are choosing not to report for reasons such as not wanting to interfere with the rights of parents to discipline, seeing their role as providing only education needs, and/or wanting to protect their own or the school's image. They indicate that the main reason for the ineffectiveness relates to educators being uninformed about the procedures for identifying and reporting abuse.

If educators are expected to be effective reporters of child maltreatment, one could conclude that they should receive intense training on the subject. According to Mahoney (1996), this is not happening. He provides a statistic revealing that "81% of the teachers questioned received no information in college about child maltreatment and 66% had not received any in-service training on the subject" (Mahoney, p. 234).
Are professionals fulfilling their duties as mandated reporters?

It has been determined that reporters are not always following the guidelines for mandated reporting. This may be occurring for several reasons. Some individuals fail to report because they are unclear if their case meets the criteria for a reportable offense. As stated earlier, some chose not to report because they felt that by doing so, they might jeopardize their client's safety or interrupt the progress they had made in their therapy with the abuser. Finally, some refuse to report because they lack the confidence in the Child Protection System to deal with the case in an effective manner (Crenshaw, Bartell & Lichtenberg, 1994). In this study, it was found that the reporting of maltreatment often depended on variables such as age, admitting that abuse occurred either by the child or by the perpetrator, and the confidence of the mandated reporters that abuse actually occurred. Kalichman and Brosig (1992) found similar results that indicated people are more apt to report when there is physical evidence that the abuse has occurred.

Mahoney (1996) indicates that educators are better able to identify signs of physical abuse and neglect and less able to identify signs of emotional or sexual abuse, which are just as prevalent. But even if they are able to identify the signs of abuse or neglect, it does not mean that they will report. According to Mahoney, professionals take into account both their interpretation of the law and the consequences that may result for the child if they choose to report. According to law, "the decision to report is predetermined by statute, not left to the professional to assess" (Mahoney, 1996, p.232).
Chapter III- A Theoretical Framework

Imagine yourself as that child again. Imagine that you are being questioned by other students and teachers as to why you have a black eye. Imagine having to make up a story that you ran into a door, when in actuality, your father's fist ran into you. Imagine being teased by the other students about being poor and wanting to yell and hit them like your father did you. Now imagine being that father. You just lost your job and are going into further debt with each morning you awake. Imagine your deceased father still yelling at you from his grave, telling you how stupid you are and that you can never do anything right. Imagine the anger you feel. Imagine fighting with your son over spilling the last jug of milk, losing control and hitting him. Finally, imagine that you are the mother, the wife. Imagine what your son is going through right now and how much you would like to stand up for him, however, you are afraid that your husband's wrath will turn on you. There are no winners here. Each person is a victim of the vicious cycle of child abuse. How can this cycle be stopped? To shed some light on possible answers to this question, we can look to the theories of "advocacy" and "empowerment."

Theory of Advocacy

The theory of advocacy, as utilized in modern social work, originates in the field of law. As lawyers represent their clients in court, acting and arguing on behalf of their clients, social workers represent their clients by interpreting their values and speaking on their behalf to other more powerful groups of people (Payne, 1997). A major objective of advocacy is to ensure that clients are receiving their rights as citizens and human beings. Some of these rights,
although not guaranteed, include shelter, food, clothing, safety, and the services that are needed to assist individuals in obtaining the resources necessary not only for survival, but a decent life. Although it stems from the notions of welfare rights and Social Security benefits, it has since developed into a wider application (Payne, 1997).

A different form of advocacy developed during the 1980's. Its focus was on those individuals who had been diagnosed with mental illness and learning disabilities. The goal of advocacy within this arena was to ensure that these individuals had access to services that would help ensure them the opportunity to manage their own lives and obtain their civil rights. Hence, came the term "self-advocacy," in which people with disabilities, mainly learning disabilities, learned to assert themselves and speak on their own behalf with the aid of others. Other terms that evolved included "citizen advocacy" and "peer advocacy." Citizen advocacy involves citizens, as volunteers, helping clients in need by developing relationships with them and being a representative on behalf of their needs. Peer advocacy involves individuals who are experiencing particular hardships, working together to represent their individual needs (Payne, 1997).

In looking at the theory of advocacy, it seems to indicate that not all people are able to fully stand up for their rights, because they are physically or mentally unable to do so, or do not feel confident or comfortable in doing so. It also seems to indicate that if these individuals were able to link themselves or be linked to others who could advocate for them, they would be able to obtain the resources they need to ensure a better life for themselves.

This brings us back to the scenario displayed earlier. What is going to happen to this family, especially the child? In most cases, the children involved
in abuse have little or no chance of stopping the abuse on their own. Some children do not even realize that what is being done to them is wrong. They need help. This is where the child protection system needs to step in, starting with the mandated reporters. If the mandated reporters are able to advocate for the victim, there is a greater chance that the victim will be protected from further abuse. That is why it is important that mandated reporters, especially educators, need to be provided with extensive training so that they will know how to best advocate for children and their families. Child protection workers also play a vital role in advocacy, for they are able to link families to the resources that will help enable all members to get the help they need.

**Theory of Empowerment**

The theory of empowerment stems from the field of management theory and practice. The belief behind the management theory is that if those individuals working in an organization are given the necessary skills to carry out objectives with freedom from managerial controls, there will be an increase in both motivation and achievement (Payne, 1997). As did the theory of advocacy, the existence of empowerment, under the realm of social work, became full-blown in the 1980's and 1990's (Payne, 1997).

When the term empowerment is broken down, we find the word “power.” Often times this term can be seen as negative and oppressive, for if one person or group of people are seen to have power, it often means that others are left “powerless.” However, in the case of empowerment, power is seen as something positive, creating more options for those individuals who had been oppressed in some way (Payne, 1997). The basic objective of empowerment is “social justice...giving people greater security and political and social equality
through mutual support and shared learning, building up small steps towards wider goals" (Payne, 1997, p. 268).

Empowerment is a very important term in dealing with clients from a "strengths perspective." Its focus is not only on identifying the problem areas, but also identifying preexisting skills or resources and helping to identify a full range of new skills and resources the client can use in the problem-solving process (Payne, 1997). In looking at the theory of empowerment, it seems to indicate that if oppressed individuals are given the skills, strategies, and resources to effectively deal with their presenting problems, they regain a sense of power, which often increases their sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

Going back to the scenario presented earlier, if the victims are empowered in some way, they may be able to learn to cope with their own issues of abuse and stop the cycle. Although children do not have any say over the reporting of abuse, they can be empowered when they learn that abuse is not okay, and that they have a right to be safe, rather than harmed. They can learn that although they have been treated with violence, it is not okay for them to be violent as well. They can be taught anger/stress management to increase their coping strategies. Perhaps if the father becomes empowered, he may learn to cope with his own history of abuse, deal with his financial situation, develop anger management strategies, and rebuild his relationship with his family. Finally, if the mother is empowered, she may be able to learn assertiveness skills, increase her own sense of self-worth, and move herself and her child away from the abusive situation if the father does not get help.
Summary

In looking at both theories of advocacy and empowerment, the mandated reporter seems to be a key component. Without some form of intervention, the victim may be at risk of abusing his/her own children in the future or perhaps find themselves in other abusing relationships. Without some form of intervention, the abuser will, in almost all cases, continue to abuse his/her child, or any child in general if the abuser is not the parent. (Daro & McCurdy, 1994). If the abuse is recognized by a mandated reporter and reported to child protection, then perhaps the members of the family can be empowered to make some changes with the advocacy of the mandated reporter and the child protection worker. Rather than being the enemy, it would seem to be more effective if the child protection worker could be seen as advocating for the family rather than against them. They should be seen as a support system, providing information about the investigation process, and suggesting possible resources for the family (Carbino, 1991).

If mandated reporters are to be effective in their role as mandated reporters, they need to feel “empowered” as well. Having to report may be a frightening experience. What you do with the information you have received may have a huge impact on the child’s safety, well-being and/or future. If you do not follow the procedures of reporting in the proper manner, there may be a risk of putting that child in danger or even jeopardizing the interventions of child protection workers. Again, it makes sense that mandated reporters should have access to the mandated reporting guidelines as well as receive an intense training on the subject. By doing so, perhaps they will feel more “empowered,” and the confidence they have in their ability to recognize and report possible abuse and/or neglect may increase.
Imagine being that child once again. You participated in a school program on abuse and realized that it is not normal or okay for your dad to give you a black eye. You decide to take a risk and talk to your teacher. Your teacher assures you that he/she is going to try to help you and sits down with you and the school social worker to discuss this further and to link you up with yet another social support. The alleged abuse is reported to the local child protection agency. A social worker comes out to talk to you further about this abuse. She meets with your parents. The mom is linked up with some social supports of her own. She feels empowered and decides that she will leave her husband if the abuse does not stop. The dad realizes that he needs help and does not want to lose his family. The whole family gets help in preserving their family system. Dad finds a new job and learns stress and anger management skills, mom finds a support group and a network of friends, and the child is doing better in school and starts to make additional friends.

Of course this does not always happen, nor does it frequently occur. Often times there is a breakdown somewhere in the system. For the safety of children and the help of the family unit, something needs to be done. Guidelines for mandated reporting need to be more clear, and there seems to be a need for empowerment services for the families and the mandated reporters who are dealing with abuse. Of course, one research project can not make this happen. The hope behind this research is to identify if there is a need for further training in mandated reporting for the educators in this particular mid sized urban school district. If so, then to provide them (with the help of Child Protection) with more extensive training to help them effectively advocate and empower the children and families they are working with, as well as themselves as mandated reporters.
Chapter IV-Methodology

In reviewing the literature on the mandated reporting of child abuse, there seems to be a consensus that the definitions of child maltreatment are unclear. Mandated reporters are left to use their own discretion in deciding what is and what is not a reportable offense of child abuse. It would seem that if the guidelines used for mandated reporting were more clear and specific, and if mandated reporters received proper training on these guidelines, then they would have a greater chance of determining the most effective intervention to use. In researching this hypothesis further, this study will focus on educators as mandated reporters, as well as child protection workers to address these research questions: 1). Are educators in this particular mid-size urban school district able to distinguish between what is and what is not a reportable offense 2). Is there congruence between what is reported by educators and what is actually investigated by workers in the local Child Protection Agency? 3). Are educators in need of more intensive training in order to be more effective in their role as mandated reporters?

Defining Concepts, Variables, Units of Analysis

The concept that will be researched will be the mandated reporting of child abuse and will consist of physical abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. The units of analysis will be those individuals working as elementary educators in this particular school district and the child protection workers representing the county in which this school district lies.
In looking at the hypothesis, the independent variable would be the clarity of the guidelines for mandated reporting and the training received by educators on these guidelines. The dependent variable would be the ability of educators to determine the most effective intervention/s used in dealing with possible child maltreatment. The secondary variables would include job title, number of years experience working with children in an educational setting, and the type of training the educators have received in the area of child abuse and the guidelines for mandated reporting.

The variables used in this study can be operationally defined as follows:
The **guidelines for mandated reporting and the definitions** used in this research consist of those set forth in the Child Maltreatment policy for the state of Minnesota. The knowledge and understanding of these guidelines can be measured by comparing the interventions used by educators on the questionnaire and the interventions chosen by the child protection workers, who are supposed to be experts on child abuse policy.

**Effective interventions** are interventions used that best comply with the guidelines set forth by policy. For instance, if a child has an injury and you suspect that he/she is in danger, the best intervention would be to report it to child protection, rather than calling the parents with your concerns. The most effective interventions will be measured by looking at the responses given by child protection workers.

**Study Population and Sampling**

The study population used in this research consists of elementary educators and the local child protection agency responsible for cases reported by this particular school district. In order to receive a sample of the different
types of educators, they were separated into five categories; teachers, educational assistants, school nurses (health aides), school support staff and administrators. The category of teachers include classroom teachers, specialists, and special education teachers. The category of support staff include school social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists. The category of school administrators include both principals and assistant principals. The sample consists of all the elementary educators with a total possibility of 500 responses from elementary educators.

Those educators in this particular school district generally file reports with the child protection unit located in the southern part of the district. In order to receive significant feedback from child protection workers, the child protection unit in northern part of the district will also be included in the study population. Because there are a total of 10 workers in both units, copies of the surveys will be sent to each person, in hopes to receive a greater response.

Measurement Issues

In implementing the research design, it is expected that systematic error will possibly occur. Systematic error can occur in the way we collect data as well as in the dynamics of those providing the data. It is related to validity, meaning that the information gathered by the researcher gives a false picture of the concept we are trying to measure (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). In relation to this particular study, just because educators may report that they would choose a certain intervention, it does not necessarily mean that they would actually do so in reality. They may know what they are supposed to do, yet, choose not to report because they do not want to hurt the relationship they have with their students. Perhaps the educator is irresponsible in his/her duties and therefore
neglects his/her job to report suspected abuse. Results could also be effected by the matter of social desirability. The respondents may try to choose the intervention/s they think they should be using according to the definitions, not necessarily the ones they believe they would actually employ. Along the same lines, child protection workers could be answering according to how cases should be handled by law, not necessarily how their particular department chooses to deal with reported cases. Finally, perhaps those educators who have more training with mandated reporting or feel more comfortable making the decision to report will be more apt to complete the surveys.

There is also a risk for random error, in which there is no consistent pattern of error. Random error relates to reliability, which is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). Again, in relation to this study, random error could occur if the educators or child protection workers are overworked and stressed. The respondents may quickly go through the survey without reading it carefully and giving it much thought.

**Instrumentation and Data Collection**

In an effort to collect data for this study, a questionnaire was distributed to 500 elementary educators and 13 workers in child protection. It was distributed only one time and there was no second mailing to encourage additional participation. The questionnaire given out to the educators consisted of some general background information to determine the job title of the participants, the number of years they have been working with children in an educational setting, the type of training they have received in the past 5-10 years in order to prepare them for their role as mandated reporters, and the type of training they feel they
need. The respondents were asked to read a series of vignettes that consisted of information provided to them by fictional students. The information used in these vignettes were developed with the use of actual cases provided by a child protection worker. Based on their experience as mandated reporters, they were asked to identify the intervention/s they would generally use in each situation. Upon completion, they were asked to send them back to this researcher’s mailbox at the school, in which she works, via inter-office mail.

A similar copy of the questionnaire was sent out to the child protection workers. They were asked to complete the surveys based on how they would anticipate educators to intervene in situations such as those portrayed in the vignettes. They were also asked to give some background information, including the number of years they have worked in the area of child protection. They were asked to give feedback as to the type of training they feel is necessary for educators to effectively carry out their role as mandated reporters. They were provided with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and asked to return them to the researcher.

Protection of Human Subjects

In an attempt to protect human subjects to the best of one’s ability, it is always important to pay attention to the ethical issues that might arise. As indicated in the research design, careful attention has been paid to these ethical issues to help ensure that the educators and child protection workers involved will be protected. Both the Superintendent of this particular school district and the Director of Child Protection were contacted to obtain approval. To ensure anonymity, the names of the school district and the county are not disclosed. Participants were directed to not identify themselves in any way
when completing the questionnaire. Again, the envelopes were pre-addressed
to decrease the possibility of participants including any identifying
information. The participants were informed that they are by no means required
to complete the questionnaire. They were informed that this information will be
shared with the Superintendent or any other members of administration that
may be interested in the findings. Again, the participants were assured that
their names will remain anonymous, and that even the researcher would not
know who has or has not completed and returned the questionnaire.
Chapter V - Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study in regards to both the quantitative and qualitative data provided by the respondents. It will look at the demographics of the respondents, the congruency levels between educators and child protection workers in regards to the intervention/s they would choose in specific situations, and the possibility of further training needed for educators on the topic of child maltreatment.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative findings for this research project are as follows: Out of the 500 elementary educators who received a questionnaire, 182 (36%) educators responded. Again, questionnaires were only sent out one time and no follow up was done.

Background Information

As indicated in the methodology section, the educators were separated into five categories and are shown in Table 1. The categories included teachers, educational assistants, school nurses, support staff (social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists), and administrators. Of the 182 respondents, there were 147 teachers (80%), 19 educational assistants (10.4%), 5 nurses (health aides) (2.7 %), 4 support staff (3.8%), and 7 administrators (3.1%). Of the 10 child protection workers who received questionnaires, 5 responded.
Table 1. Job titles of educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed. assistant</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sw/coun/psy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrator</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=182

Experience of respondents

The 182 educators who responded to the questionnaire had various levels of experience and are shown in Table 2. The data indicated that there were 27 educators (14.8%) with experience in the range of 1 to 5 years; 37 educators (20.3%) in the range of 6-10 years; 24 educators (13.2%) in the range of 11 to 15 years; 21 educators (11.5%) in the range of 16 to 20 years; 23 educators (12.6%) in the range of 21 to 25 years, and finally, 50 educators (27.5%) who have been working with children in an educational setting for 26
years or more. With the exception of those educators having more than 26 years of experience, the numbers seem to be evenly spread out among the other categories. More than 50% of the respondents had at least 16 years or more experience.

**Table 2. Experience of educators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 years-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=182
The data also looked at the experience of child protection workers, specific to the number of years of experience they have had working in the field of child protection. Out of the five respondents, 1 worker indicated an experience level in the range of 1 to 5 years; one has been working in the field for 11 to 15 years; two indicated an experience level in the range of 16 to 20 years; and one child protection worker has been working in the field in the range of 21 to 25 years. Similar to educators, more than 50% of the child protection workers had at least 16 years or more of experience.

**Information and training on guidelines for mandated reporting**

The data indicated that not all of the educators had received information stating the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse according to state and county law. This is evident as shown in Table 3. Although 140 (76.9%) of the respondents had received information on the guidelines, there were 42 (21.1%) respondents who had not received any information in this area. In further analyzing this particular data, there is an indication that among the 42 respondents who have received no written information, 26 have been working with children in an educational setting for less than 10 years. On the other end, only 2 of the 50 educators with 26 or more years of experience hadn’t received any written information.
Along the same lines, not all of the respondents had received training related to their role as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Although 68% of the respondents had received training in the form of workshops, inservices, and/or college instruction, 32% (58 respondents) had received no training in the area of mandated reporting of child maltreatment. In analyzing this information further, the data indicates that out of the 42 educators who had

Table 3. Comparison between information received and # of years experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had received information</th>
<th># of years experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=182
received no information stating the guidelines for mandated reporting, 14 had also received no training in the area of mandated reporting of child maltreatment. This is shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Educators receiving information, but no training on the guidelines.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had received information</th>
<th>Educators, no training</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to educators, all of the child protection workers responding to the questionnaire had both received written information on the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse as well as training on the mandated reporting of child maltreatment.

**Intervention strategies chosen by respondents-scenarios**

In analyzing the data for this section, the information will be separated into three categories; physical abuse/corporal punishment, emotional abuse, and neglect. Five scenarios (2,3,6,7,and 8), fit under the category of physical abuse, scenario #5 fits under the category of emotional abuse, and finally scenarios 1 and 4 fit under the category of neglect.
Physical abuse/corporal punishment

Scenario #2: This scenario involves a student reporting that he does not want his teacher to call his parents for fear that his mom and dad will “beat him up.” When questioned further, the student reveals that they spank him and slap him across the face when he gets in trouble. In choosing how to intervene, there was agreement by at least 60% of both educators and child protection workers that one should at least document the information in this situation. Out of 181 educators responding to this question, 125 (69.1%) believed that documentation was necessary. Similarly, out of 5 child protection workers, 3 (60%) believed educators should document in this situation. There seemed to be some discrepancy, however, in the decision about whether to call parents. Very few educators (14.4%), believed that they would call parents in this situation. In contrast, 3 (60%) out of the 5 child protection workers indicated that educators should be calling home and sharing their concerns with the parents. Finally, there seemed to be limited congruency between educators and child protection workers in regards to reporting to the child protection unit in this matter. There were 78 educators (43.1%) who chose this intervention and 1 child protection worker who believed this was a reportable situation.

Scenario #3: This scenario fits under the category of possible physical abuse as well. It involves a student coming to school with marks on his neck that look like bite marks. The student reveals that he received them playing “vampire” with his dad and sometimes his dad gets a little too rough. Of the 181 educators responding to this question, 115 (63.5%) believed that it was necessary to document this situation and 82 (45.3%) felt as though it was a reportable offense. Of the five child protection workers, two believed that it was important to document in this situation. The majority of the child protection
workers, 3 out of 5 (60%) indicated that educators should be reporting to the child protection unit in this matter. There was congruence between educators and child protection workers in the decision to contact parents. Only 33 (18.2%) of the educators chose this intervention and 1 of the 5 child protection workers (20%) would expect educators to intervene in this way.

Scenario #6: This scenario involves a situation of possible physical abuse involving visible marks. This particular student reveals a conflict she had with her mother, resulting in her mother striking her numerous times with a belt. The marks consist of red welts on her arms. There was agreement by both educators and child protection workers regarding the need to document. Out of 181 educators responding, 95 (52.5%) believed that it was necessary to document. In looking at the data for child protection workers, 2 out of the 5 workers (40%) chose this intervention. There were only 6 educators (3.3%) who believed it was important to contact parents. One of the five child protection workers (20%) believed this was a necessary intervention. There was congruence in regards to reporting to child protection. However, child protection workers indicated a stronger reaction to the importance of reporting this situation than did educators. All of the child protection workers indicated this to be a reportable offense, whereas, 83.4% of the educators (151) believed that this situation should be reported. Of the 30 educators who did not choose this intervention, 21 (70%) had less than 15 years of experience working with children in an educational setting (See Table 5). One of the educators believed that it was appropriate to do nothing in this situation.
Table 5. Educators reporting to Child Protection by # of years experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of years experience</th>
<th>1-5 yrs</th>
<th>6-10 yrs</th>
<th>11-15 yrs</th>
<th>16-20 yrs</th>
<th>21-25 yrs</th>
<th>26 yrs-</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 yrs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 yrs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 yrs</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 yrs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 yrs-</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=181

Of these same 30 educators, 10 (33%) had not received any written information of the guidelines for reporting child maltreatment. This is evident in Table six shown on the next page.
Table 6. Comparison between educators who have received information and those who chose to report to Child Protection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Had received information</th>
<th>Scene six- report to CP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=181

Scenario #7: This scenario involves a student who comes to school with stitches on his chin, revealing conflicting stories as to how it happened. He told a bus driver that another child pushed him. When asked by an educator, he first stated that he slipped on the kitchen floor and later claimed that his mother pushed him down the stairs and she went to jail. The data indicates that out of 181 educators responding to this question, 95 (52.5%) of them would document in this situation. Out of 5 child protection workers, not one of them
chose documentation as an intervention. There were 37 educators (20.4%) who believed that it was important to contact the parents in this situation. Child protection workers seemed to agree that contacting parents was not highly important in this situation. Only 1 out of 5 child protection workers (20%) believed this was a necessary intervention. Finally, 94 educators (51.9%) would report this situation to the child protection unit. One of the child protection workers stated that they would expect educators to do nothing in this situation, whereas three of these workers (60%) would expect educators to treat this as a reportable offense.

Scenario #8: This is the final scenario classified under the category of possible physical abuse. It involves a situation where a student shows up with a bruise on her left upper arm, claiming that her father grabbed her after a verbal argument. According to the student, her father was trying to stop her from running out the door. Educators and child protection workers seem to be in agreement that educators should document in a matter such as this example. The data indicates that out of 181 respondents, 129 educators (71.3%) and 3 child protection workers (60%) chose documentation as an intervention. There is congruence in regards to calling the parents. There were a small number of educators (16%) and one child protection worker (20%) who believed that the parent should be contacted in this matter. Finally, the data indicates a discrepancy between educators and child protection workers as to whether this exemplifies a reportable offense. Fifty educators (27.6%) chose reporting to the child protection unit as an intervention. Of the 5 child protection workers, 3 of them (60%) indicated the importance of reporting this situation.
Emotional Abuse

Scenario #5: This scenario depicts a situation that could possibly fit under the category of emotional abuse. In this situation, we have a student who frequently puts herself down as well as other peers. She gets mad easily, she has a difficult time saying anything nice, and she often swears at students and staff. She claims that her parents call her names all the time, that they scream and swear at her, and they don’t like her because she is a bad kid and never does anything right. Sixty one percent of the educators (122 educators) indicated the importance of documenting in this matter. Only 2 out of the 5 child protection workers (40%) expected educators to document. There was discrepancy between educators and child protection workers regarding whether or not to contact parents in this situation. Of the 181 educators responding to this question, 78 (39%) believed that the parents should be called. All five of the child protection workers believed that educators should be calling parents in this situation. There was congruence between educators and child protection workers in regards to reporting this matter to the child protection unit. There was a small percentage of educators (12%) who chose reporting as an intervention, while the majority did not believe it to be necessary. There was not one child protection worker who indicated that this was a reportable offense.

Neglect

Scenario #1: This scenario fits under the category of possible neglect. Here we have a student who is failing to get his assignment notebook signed because mom works a lot of overtime and hasn’t been getting home until 9:00 at night. The student is ten years old, an only child, and comes from a single parent home. The majority of the educators chose either documenting or contacting parents as appropriate interventions. Regarding documentation, 107
(59.1%) of the educators chose this intervention. In regard to calling the parents, 99 (54.7%) believed this intervention to be appropriate. Although only one of the child protection workers indicated that documentation was an appropriate intervention for educators, 4 out of the 5 workers (80%) believed that calling the parents would be an important intervention. Seven educators (3.9%) chose to do nothing in this situation and 15 (8.3%) chose to report to the child protection unit. There were no child protection workers who indicated the need for educators to report this matter.

Scenario #4: This final scenario also fits under the category of possible neglect. Here we have a student who is failing all of her classes. She seems tired most of the time and has a disheveled appearance. She doesn't have time to complete work because she takes care of her two younger brothers. One of the brothers has autism and the other is in preschool. Dad is home, but the child claims that he doesn't do much to care for her brothers. Again, we have small percentage of educators (18.5%) who would choose to report this matter. All of the child protection workers agree that this is not a reportable offense. There is congruence regarding documentation as an intervention. Out of 18 educators responding to this question, 108 (54%) of them believe that educators should be documenting this information. Out of 5 child protection workers, two of them (40%) indicate that educators should document. Again there is a discrepancy in regard to contacting the parents in this situation. Although 47% of educators (94) believe that parents should be contacted in this matter, 100% of the child protection workers expect educators to be contacting parents when these kinds of situations arise.
Need for training of educators

Of the 182 educators, over 90 percent indicated a desire for additional training of some form to help them perform their duties as mandated reporters in a more effective manner. More specifically, there were 138 educators (76.7%) who believe a training conducted by a child protection specialist would be helpful, and 96 educators (53.3%) who believe that an inservice for all staff is needed, while 52 educators (28.9%) believe that an inservice for new staff would be helpful. Of the 7 administrators, over 50% did not seem to believe that a training given by child protection workers was needed. This is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Comparison between job title and the perceived need for a training by a Child Protection worker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Training by CP worker</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed. assistant</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sw/coun/psy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=180
Child protection workers seem to support a need for additional training for educators. Out of the 5 respondents working as child protection workers, all of them indicated that a training given by child protection experts would be beneficial to educators.

**Ability of educators to be effective reporters of child abuse**

Each of the elementary educators participating in the research project was asked to rate their overall ability in being effective reporters of child abuse. Of the 178 educators responding to this question, 18 (10.1%) rated themselves as poor, 101 (56.7%) rated themselves as satisfactory, 45 (25.3%) rated their ability as being very good, 3 (1.7%) rated themselves as exceptional, and 11 (6.2%) were undecided. As indicated in these numbers, more than 80% of the educators believe their ability to be effective mandated reporters as being satisfactory or better. Administrators, as a whole, rated themselves evenly between satisfactory and very good, as did support staff. The 18 educators who believed themselves to have a poor ability to be effective reporters came from the sub-categories of teachers and educational assistants. This data can be found in Table 8.
Table 8. Comparison between job title and the ability to be an effective reporter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>ability to be effective reporter</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
<td>very good</td>
<td>exception</td>
<td>undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed. assistant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sw/coun/psy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrator</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 18 educators who rated themselves as poor, 11 (61%) have been working with children in educational setting for less than 10 years. This is indicated in Table 9. However, the majority of the teachers and educational assistants rated themselves at a satisfactory level.
Table 9. Comparison between # of years experience and ability to be an effective reporter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of years experience</th>
<th>ability to be an effective reporter</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 yrs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 yrs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 yrs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 yrs-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The child protection workers seemed to have a higher degree of confidence in educators' ability to be effective reporters of child abuse than the educators reported themselves to have. All of the child protection workers rated the ability of educators in the range of satisfactory to very good. In fact, 4 out of the 5 child protection workers gave a rating of very good.

**Qualitative Results**

There were 54 respondents who chose to provide additional feedback in the comments section. These educators seemed to have concerns relating to both the procedure for reporting child maltreatment, and the procedure for follow through once suspected abuse or neglect had been reported. Many believed that there was a breakdown in the system, involving both mandated reporters and child protection workers.

**Educators feelings about the child protection system**

Of those respondents who chose to provide additional feedback, there was at least one that relied on the workers in child protection to assist them in deciding whether to report a possible situation of abuse and/or neglect. This particular respondent states, “Whenever I have had any questions, I always called child protection and let them decide if they should follow up. There’s often information available to them (prior reports, arrests, etc.) that we don’t have access to and we may be helping the family to get what they need when we report.” One of the educators seemed to acknowledge the fact that there is a need for an increase in funding for additional child protection workers, rather than placing the blame on the workers themselves.

Although there were some educators who spoke positively of the child protection system and those who work within that system, there were also those who had some concerns. One theme that appeared in the data was that the
child protection system was not doing its job of protecting children in an effective manner. Some of the respondents stated that they hesitate to report for fear that nothing will be done on the part of the child protection workers. One respondent in particular states that, "Unfortunately, many of us (educators) do not report certain things because we have learned that child protection can do nothing, especially in cases of neglect, verbal abuse, etc. Even in families where abuse has been reported over and over, nothing but interviews tend to occur." Another stated that

  I have been very disappointed in my experience with child protection. They have been slow to respond to reports and do little regarding follow up. I know resources are limited, but I now have learned that things have to escalate to an extreme before actions are taken.

One of the respondents referred to the child protection system as "putting children at risk." This respondent states that, "My experience with child protection has been minimal, but my few attempts at reporting have been unsatisfactory. The child has to be in serious life danger before [they] step in and help. The children are often short-changed in the process."

  Because of their concerns with how workers in child protection will respond, some of the educators seem to believe that they have to take matters into their own hands. For example, one educator refers to "prejudging what child protection will do and reporting according to that." This same respondent admits to not reporting some forms of abuse. "I don't report emotional abuse, I figure nothing will happen anyway." Another respondent refers to having to make judgment calls when deciding to report. "I make a judgment call based on history. I usually call parents and try to get a sense of their side/story." Along
these same lines, a respondent admits, "I know I should report and not investigate myself, but I try to investigate and work with the parents because of some of the ways some reported parents have been treated because of my report."

**Teachers/Educational assistants rely on other sources**

Out of 182 respondents from the education system, 109 educators (60%), including teachers and educational assistants, indicated that they rely on support staff, and/or administrators to assist them in the decision making process and procedures for reporting suspected child maltreatment. One respondent states, “Unless it was an extreme or obvious situation, I may not be aware that it needs to be reported. I rely heavily on having a school social worker available to talk things over with.” Another refers to working as a team with the social worker in the decision to report.

I am fortunate to have access to our social worker. If I ever have any questions or doubts in my mind, I immediately go to her for help, advice, etc. I do not hesitate to report and or discuss any behavior or symptoms (physical or mental) after discussing the situation with her. We decide together what steps to take and we make a decision based on the facts involved.

Although 70 respondents included reporting to administration as an intervention, at least one had concerns with handling the situation in this manner. This educator states that "our principal tends to decide if it should be reported. He doesn't want to handle parents. Many times, our school psychologist has gone over him."
Training for the identification of child abuse and neglect

Over 90% of the respondents agree that there is a need for educators to have further training in the area of child maltreatment. Out of those 54 respondents who chose to provide additional feedback, 20 of them alluded to the fact that they were in need of further training in this area. As stated by an educator, "These questions really open up what can really happen as well as help me question the correct approach that is to be taken. We all need to be reminded of the correct approach."

It does not seem to matter if the respondents were new educators to the district or had been working in the district for some time. An experienced educator admits,

Because I have taught for many years, the initial training I received was minimal in this area. The training I received in college and the training I have had since has been very "hit and miss." I think staff need to have training in this area every year, whether it be a full-fledged training for new educators or a refresher for those who have been employed in the district for more than a year.

A less experienced educator also supports the need for training. "Being a new teacher, I do not know all of the correct steps to take. I often have to discuss it with my team of teachers and ask for their advice."

Communication

A final theme that came up with at least 5 of the respondents providing feedback, was the need for ongoing communication on the part of educators and child protection workers. One educator admits, "I often feel that I inform the principal but I am not always sure where it goes from there. Communication
could be improved." Another educator shares this concern, stating "Even if I report (to child protection), I am not always informed of what action is taken." Finally, a child protection worker responds to this issue as well when he/she states, "There is a need for cooperation between school and child protection staff. We need to be able to establish a rapport and give feedback to each other."
Chapter VI- Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine if educators in this particular school district were able to identify possible cases of child maltreatment and if the intervention strategies they would select in each situation were congruent with how local child protection workers would expect them to intervene. The study was also designed to determine if there was a need for further training in the area of child maltreatment and the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Findings

There were at least four themes that appeared in the data. The themes included intervention strategies, educators’ ability to be effective reporters of child maltreatment, educators’ dependency on support staff and/or administrators, and need for training.

Intervention strategies

Although the data indicated some congruencies among the intervention strategies chosen by both educators and child protection workers, there were also discrepancies. These discrepancies were not only between educators and child protection workers, but also between the child protection workers as a whole. Although you might expect total agreement on behalf of the individuals representing the “child protection unit,” there were many situations in which they disagreed. This is interesting, as many educators look to the child protection unit for guidance. If the expectations of the child protection workers vary, it makes it difficult for educators to know how best to intervene in such matters.
Educators and child protection workers seemed to agree on intervention strategies most often when there was a possibility of physical abuse, especially if it involved visible marks. In the situations where physical injury was reported, educators intervened most often by reporting to the child protection unit. There was also a general belief that parents should not be contacted in instances where physical injury to a child was suspected. However, there was a discrepancy in situations that portrayed some sort of corporal punishment, such as acts of spanking and slapping across the face. Although the majority of educators and child protection workers indicated that this would not be a reportable offense, there were some that still chose to report such behaviors.

There was congruence as to what interventions both educators and child protection workers would choose in areas of possible emotional abuse or neglect. There was agreement that reporting was not necessary in these particular situations. There was a discrepancy in the idea of contacting parents in this matter. Although many of the educators believed that it was important to document in such matters, very few indicated the importance of contacting parents in order to share their concerns. On the other hand, the majority of the child protection workers indicated their expectation that parents be contacted in such matters.

Although mandated reporters are expected to report when there is reasonable cause to suspect emotional abuse and neglect, the data seems to indicate that both educators and child protection workers believe otherwise, at least in these particular situations. Perhaps they do not feel that these situations constitute possible abuse or neglect. Perhaps educators predict that these cases will not be accepted for investigation, and choose against
reporting. Perhaps these situations do portray possible situations of child maltreatment, however child protection workers are so inundated with reports that they are forced to screen out situations of emotional abuse and/or neglect, unless they are life-threatening. Whatever the reasons may be, both the quantitative and qualitative data seem to indicate that children faced with emotional abuse or neglect may be unprotected from these forms of abuse.

**Educators' ability to be effective reporters of child maltreatment**

The majority of the educators rated their ability of being effective reporters of child abuse and neglect as satisfactory, which can be viewed as positive or negative based on the definition of "satisfactory." In any case, it still indicates room for much growth. Although many of the educators indicated that they have received training in this area, there were still some educators who have not received any training nor any written information on the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect. This reality has the potential to be dangerous. Perhaps one of these educators has a student in their class who is being abused and/or neglected. Perhaps this student is receiving no protection because the adult supervising him/her is not sufficiently trained to identify the signs of abuse or is not aware of what constitutes a reportable offense.

**Educators' dependency on support staff and/or administrators**

The qualitative data indicated that many educators depend on support staff and/or administrators to either assist them in making the decision to report or to take the burden off their shoulders and make the decision for them. Although social workers/counselors/psychologists can be important resources for mandated reporters and are often very educated on the topic of child maltreatment, not every elementary school in this district has the luxury of
having them on hand when these situations arise. The school psychologists
often have to travel between a number of schools, there are only a few of the
schools who actually have social workers on staff, and not one of the eleven
elementary schools has a school counselor. Because mandated reporters only
have 24 hours to make a report, they might not have access to a support person
in time, and will therefore have to make the decision on their own or with the aid
of their principal. However, consulting with principals may not always result in
the most appropriate decision. According to Mahoney (1995), although school
principals are the ones who report the most, 35% of those in his study failed to
make a report to child protection even though they suspected abuse, 43%
indicated that they received no training in the area of child maltreatment, and
80% indicated that staff members count on them to make the decision on
whether or not to report suspected child maltreatment.

Is there a need for further training for educators?

There is agreement by all educators, responding to the questionnaire
that further training in this area would be beneficial, and the majority agree that
this training would be best done by a child protection specialist. Although child
protection workers agree that the educators in this district are “very good” in
their roles as mandated reporters, they also agree that further training by child
protection specialists would be beneficial.

Many of the educators expressed a need for a reliable system that is in
place, both in the educational setting as well as in the child protection unit.
Guidelines need to be clear cut and further training on these guidelines is
necessary to increase the effectiveness of educators as mandated reporters.
Educators need to know who to report to, whether it be to their superiors or to
the child protection unit itself. Finally, educators need to be able to trust in the
current child protection system, and many do not feel they can. As one participant says, "We need a better child protection system with a more productive follow up and follow through. Kids deserve protection."

**Strengths and Limitations**

This study has the potential to be extremely beneficial to educators in this district. For those educators who have provided input, many have worked in the district for 15 years or more and have not had any refresher trainings since they began working in education. The findings of this study indicate that there are some educators who have received no training and/or guidelines to aid them in being effective mandated reporters. This study provides evidence that further training is needed. Another strength of this study is in the use of the questionnaire. Using this type of instrument, this study was able to tap into more people, helping to make the data more generalizable to the educators in this particular school district.

One limitation to using this type of questionnaire is that although this study was able to generate a larger sample, the possibility of a great deal of qualitative information was limited. A second limitation is that this researcher may only get those participants who have had experience or feel comfortable in handling matters of possible child abuse or neglect. A third limitation in using such a questionnaire is that the vignettes provide a limited amount of information. This may have made it difficult to determine which intervention/s respondents would choose in each situation and to know why they would intervene is such a way, unless they provide additional feedback. A fourth limitation relates once again to reliability. Although participants answer in such a way, it does not mean that, in actuality, they would perform that particular
intervention. Perhaps they are providing information that relates to how they think they are supposed to intervene. Finally, the participants only had one week to respond. This may have affected the number of questionnaires that were completed and returned.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

In relating these findings back to the theory of empowerment, further training seems to be the key. In order to feel confident in their ability to be effective mandated reporters, educators need to feel empowered. Training is an important way of establishing this empowerment or confidence. Another way to empower mandated reporters might lie in the dual relationship between child protection workers and educators. If educators believe that they are not alone in this process, it might help raise their comfort levels. Finally, if educators feel empowered and capable of performing their role as mandated reporters, they are in a better position to properly advocate for children and/or their families.

An interesting theme that has come from the research is the importance of social workers, counselors, and psychologists as resources for educators. Again, 60% of the educators indicated that they depend on support staff to either aid them in their duties as mandated reporters or to take on the role themselves. Many educators who provided additional feedback spoke highly of the social workers in their building. They indicated that they depend on the social worker to be knowledgeable about the guidelines for mandated reporting and to know the correct way to handle a situation. This finding speaks highly of having support staff in the school system. However, if educators are to depend on this knowledge, the social workers, counselors, and/or psychologists should
be appropriately trained in the area of child maltreatment and the guidelines for reporting suspected abuse and/or neglect.

**Implications for Social Work Research**

Although only elementary educators were selected for the sample, this study could easily be replicated and used at the secondary level. This study could also be used in other school districts.

Although there were educators who seemed to understand the funding and personnel restraints put on the child protection system, there seemed to be some negative feelings on the part of educators towards the child protection system as a whole. There could be some additional research done that studies the relationship between educators and child protection workers as dual players in assuring the safety of children. This research could also study the needs of both players in helping to make their efforts more successful.

Finally, this particular study did not include any scenarios that focused on possible sexual abuse. Further research could be done to find out if educators are able to identify signs of sexual abuse and to understand how to intervene in such matters.

**Conclusion**

The scenarios provided in this research represent only a small portion of the various situations that go on in the lives of children. Perhaps some fit under the definition of child abuse, whereas some may indicate a personal style of punishment or parenting in general. The guidelines for distinguishing between the two are often unclear, and when there is room for interpretation and discretion, it makes it even more difficult to know how to intervene. Further
more, just because there are guidelines for abuse and neglect, it does not mean that these guidelines are being enforced.

The guidelines for the mandated reporting of child maltreatment call for a "reasonable cause to suspect." The individuals who reported in each of the scenarios provided in the study seemed to believe there was cause to suspect. However, child protection workers indicated the need for educators to report in very few of the situations. There is a need for educators to be aware of not only the guidelines for mandated reporting set forth by law, but also the realistic guidelines that are enforced by the child protection system. Then again, perhaps if the child protection system was provided with appropriate funds, there would be more workers to help ensure that these guidelines are being enforced in the first place.

One of the most exciting things that has resulted from this research is the way it seems to be coming to life. The Superintendent of this particular school district has been supportive from the beginning and has stated that if the results indicate a need for further training, he will give his approval for such training. A dialogue has been opened up with the child protection unit with whom educators in this district file reports. The director of child protection has already stated that child protection workers could come to the schools and do some extensive training on the topic of child maltreatment and mandated reporting.

Children do not always know their rights or know when these rights are being violated. It would be best if there was a reliable system set up to protect the children who are experiencing abuse and/or neglect. This system should include both mandated reporters and child protection workers acting as a team, a system that is supported by the state and federal government. Children deserve to be protected.
References


MANDATED REPORTERS IN EDUCATION

Background Information:

Job Title:

- teacher
- educational assistant (aide)
- nurse
- social worker/counselor/psychologist
- administrator
- other (please specify)

Number of years experience working with children in an educational setting:

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26 years and above

Have you received any information stating the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse according to state and county law?

- yes
- no

What kind of training have you received relating to your role as mandated reporter of Child Abuse? (last 5-10 years)

- no training
- workshops (outside the school)
- inservice
- college instruction
- other (please specify)
Please read each scenario and circle the answer/s that best portray the intervention/s you would use in each situation (circle all that apply). I ask that you avoid consulting with other colleagues.

1. A student brings it to your attention that he hasn't been getting his assignment notebook signed because his mom has been working overtime and hasn't been home until 9:00 p.m. The student is 10 years old, an only child and comes from a single parent home. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ________________________________
      (please specify)

2. A student begs that you not call home because his mom and dad will "beat him up". You ask him what that means and he says that they spank him and slap him across the face when he gets in trouble. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ________________________________
      (please specify)

3. A student comes to school with marks on his neck that look like bite marks. When you ask him how he got hurt, he informs you that he and his dad like to play "vampire" and sometimes his dad gets a little too rough. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ________________________________
      (please specify)

4. You notice that a student is failing all of her classes. She seems tired most of the time and has a disheveled appearance. When you ask her about her homework, she informs you that she doesn't have time because she is taking care of her two brothers. This student is in 6th grade. One brother is in 3rd grade and has been diagnosed with autism but is high functioning. The other brother is in preschool. She reports that dad is home, but doesn't do much. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ________________________________
      (please specify)
5. The student is in 4th grade. She frequently puts herself down as well as other peers. She gets mad easily and usually starts to yell. When she is asked to say something nice about herself or her peers, she usually can not think of anything. She often swears at other students and staff. When asked where she hears that kind of language, she states that “My mom and dad call me names all of the time. They always scream and swear at me. They don’t like me because I am a bad kid and I never do anything right”. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection

Other: ____________________________

(please specify)

6. A student is in tears at school today. She had a conflict with her mother last night and her mother struck her numerous times with a belt. She has red welts on her arms. She states that her mother threatens to put her up for adoption. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection

Other: ____________________________

(please specify)

7. A student came to school with stitches across his chin. The bus driver said another child at day care had pushed him. The boy told you that he slipped on the kitchen floor and hit his chin. Later he said his mom pushed him on the stairs and she went to jail. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection

Other: ____________________________

(please specify)

8. A student arrived at school today with a bruise on her left upper arm. She states that she got it when her father grabbed her after a verbal argument. She was attempting to run out the door and her father grabbed her to keep her from going. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parent
- report to child protection

Other: ____________________________

(please specify)
What training areas would be helpful in effectively performing your duties as mandated reporters?

____ in service for new staff  ____ inservice for all staff (provided by administrators)

____ training by a child protection specialist

____ other (please specify)

How would you rate your overall ability in being an effective reporter of child abuse?

____ poor  ____ satisfactory  ____ very good  ____ exceptional  ____ undecided

Comments:

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

IRB #99-20-3
CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS

Background Information:

Number of years experience working in the field of child protection:

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26 years and above

Have you received any written information on the guidelines for the mandated reporting of child abuse?

- yes
- no

What kind of training have you received on the mandated reporting of child abuse?

- no training
- inservice
- workshops (outside of work)
- college instruction
- other (please specify)
Please read each scenario and circle the answer/s that best portray the intervention/s you would expect educators to use in each situation (circle all that apply). I ask that you avoid consulting with other colleagues.

1. A student brings it to your attention that he hasn't been getting his assignment notebook signed because his mom has been working overtime and hasn't been home until 9:00 p.m. The student is 10 years old, an only child and comes from a single parent home. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ____________________________
     (please specify)

2. A student begs that you not call home because his mom and dad will "beat him up". You ask him what that means and he says that they spank him and slap him across the face when he gets in trouble. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ____________________________
     (please specify)

3. A student comes to school with marks on his neck that look like bite marks. When you ask him how he got hurt, he informs you that he and his dad like to play "vampire" and sometimes his dad gets a little too rough. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ____________________________
     (please specify)

4. You notice that a student is failing all of her classes. She seems tired most of the time and has a disheveled appearance. When you ask her about her homework, she informs you that she doesn't have time because she is taking care of her two brothers. This student is in 6th grade. One brother is in 3rd grade and has been diagnosed with autism but is high functioning. The other brother is in preschool. She reports that dad is home, but doesn't do much. Would you:
   - do nothing
   - document
   - call parent
   - report to child protection
   - other ____________________________
     (please specify)
5. The student is in 4th grade. She frequently puts herself down as well as other peers. She gets mad easily and usually starts to yell. When she is asked to say something nice about herself or her peers, she usually cannot think of anything. She often swears at other students and staff. When asked where she hears that kind of language, she states that “My mom and dad call me names all of the time. They always scream and swear at me. They don’t like me because I am a bad kid and I never do anything right”. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection
- other (please specify)

6. A student is in tears at school today. She had a conflict with her mother last night and her mother struck her numerous times with a belt. She has red welts on her arms. She states that her mother threatens to put her up for adoption. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection
- other (please specify)

7. A student came to school with stitches across his chin. The bus driver said another child at day care had pushed him. The boy told you that he slipped on the kitchen floor and hit his chin. Later he said his mom pushed him on the stairs and she went to jail. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection
- other (please specify)

8. A student arrived at school today with a bruise on her left upper arm. She states that she got it when her father grabbed her after a verbal argument. She was attempting to run out the door and her father grabbed her to keep her from going. Would you:

- do nothing
- document
- call parents
- report to child protection
- other (please specify)
How would you rate educators in this county in being effective reporters of child abuse?

___poor   ___satisfactory   ___very good   ___exceptional   ___undecided

What training areas would you see helpful in order for educators to be more effective reporters of child abuse?

___in-services for new staff   ___in-services for all staff (provided by administrators)

___training given by child protection experts   ___other (please specify)

Comments:

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

IRB #99-20-3