



# Facilitator Resource: Key Learning by Training Section

## Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

Each section includes corresponding slides with the key learning points bulleted beneath.

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### Putting Families First

#### Topics Covered In This Section

- Putting Families First
- Importance of Preventing Child Maltreatment

#### Key Learning

- **Strategic Transformation** - The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is going through a strategic transformation called “Putting Families First” to serve more children, youth, and families in-home with supportive services, and to strengthen local communities.
- **Expect different responses** - Understand that the range of responses from the Child Welfare system may look different than in the past.
- **Maltreatment is an ACE** - Recognize that child maltreatment is an adverse childhood experience, or ACE, which has both short and long term negative effects on individuals, families, and communities.
- **Some students are placed at a higher risk** - Understand that some student groups are more vulnerable to child maltreatment, and school staff should be aware of these groups and work to increase those students' sense of safety at school.
- **Positive Childhood Experiences are helpful** - Understand that Positive Childhood Experiences, like supportive relationships at school, buffer the negative impacts of ACEs and may have lasting impacts on student mental health into adulthood.

### Mandated Reporting and Supporting

#### Topics Covered In This Section

- Mandated Reporting and Supporting Overview
- Additional Considerations Related to Reporting
- Concerns of Risk and Liability/Failure to Report

#### Key Learning

- **All school employees are mandated reporters and supporters** - When mandated reporters have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, a school employee is legally required to immediately report to county CPS or local law enforcement.
- **Process for determining "reasonable cause"** - Gather information, engage in critical thinking, and consider the impact of bias.
- **Families are the solution** - Families should be viewed as part of the solution, not the problem.
- **Responsibility for supporting** - A mandated supporter's responsibility toward students and families does not end with a report to local child welfare; but instead, a report when warranted helps initiate a possible collaboration to broaden the students' support system.



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- **Continue support at school** - Staff should continue to support the student at school.
- **Indian Child Welfare Act** - Understand basic information about The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)/WICWA.
- **Protections and Penalties** - There are protections for mandated reporters when reporting in good faith and criminal penalties outlined in statute for mandated reporters who intentionally violate mandated reporter laws by failing to report.

### The Role of Bias in Child Welfare System

#### Topic Covered In This Section

- The Role of Bias in Child Welfare System

#### Key Learning

- **Negative impacts of systems** - School systems and child welfare agencies have long histories in our society; however the negative impacts have disproportionately affected people of color, especially Black and Indigenous families.
- **Racial disproportionality in reporting** - Disproportionality in reporting on the basis of race, culture, and ethnicity has been evident for more than 50 years and is widespread.
- **Staff should consider how bias influences decisions** - It is the responsibility of school staff to become more aware of their own background, worldview, and biases and how these may influence their view of individuals, groups, and situations.

### Responsibilities of School Staff in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect at School

#### Topic Covered In This Section

- Responsibilities of School Staff in the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect at School

#### Key Learning

- **Reporting is only one aspect** - Mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect is only one aspect in the prevention of child maltreatment.
- **Staff have a role in prevention** - School staff have responsibilities towards the prevention of child abuse and neglect at school. All staff are responsible for building relationships and promoting a culture of care and support and for promoting effective policies, procedures, and actions.
- **Prevent Adult Sexual Misconduct at School** - Important steps towards identifying and preventing adult sexual misconduct at school includes staff being able to identify early signs of inappropriate behavior, and speaking up when inappropriate behavior is occurring and taking action after self-assessment.
- **School leaders can set prevention priorities** - School leaders can send a clear message that child protection is a priority, motivate staff to implement skills learned in training, and set clear and consistent prevention policies.



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### The Structure of CPS

#### Topic Covered In This Section

- The Structure of CPS

#### Key Learning

- **The importance of collaboration between Schools and Child Welfare** - School staff are encouraged to reach out to their child and tribal child welfare agencies to discuss ways to engage in regular dialogue and to enhance partnerships to benefit children and families in their local community.
- **Understand the structure of CPS** - Collaboration is enhanced when school staff understand the goals and structure of Child Protective Services.
- **Stages of the System** - Wisconsin's child welfare system is divided into three stages: access, initial assessment, and ongoing services. Specific steps occur in each stage.

### Definitions of Maltreatment

#### Topics Covered In This Section

- Definitions of Maltreatment
- Sexual Abuse Defined
- Child Sex Trafficking

#### Key Learning

- **Understand the definitions of maltreatment** - It is important for all school staff to be familiar with the definitions of child maltreatment, so that they can recognize when a report is or is not required, and to reduce unnecessary calls to CPS. This section defines the terms.
- **The definition of sexual abuse can feel complex and includes various factors.**
- **Differences in reporting requirements** - The suggested procedures for school staff who become aware that a student under the age of 18 has had voluntary sexual contact or intercourse with another person differ depending upon the student's age.
- **Reporting of Child Sex Trafficking** - A tool exists to support school staff in determining when a report may be warranted called the Wisconsin Child Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Indicator and Response Guide.

### Gathering Information & Gathering Information from Parents

#### Topic Covered In This Section

- Gathering Information & Gathering Information from Parents

#### Key Learning

- **Staff must gather basic information** - When a concern arises, if school staff are unsure whether they have reasonable cause, they must gather enough information to make this determination. Information gathering must proceed immediately and expeditiously, and if and when a school staff member has reasonable cause to suspect child maltreatment they must "immediately" report.
- **Understand guidelines for talking with youth** - Staff should have an understanding of guidelines for



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gathering information and discussing concerns with youth.

- **It is important to ask open-ended questions with empathy and care.**
- **Information gathering could include obtaining information from parents or caregivers.**
- **Use a strength-based lens** - School staff should approach families with curiosity, instead of suspicion, applying a strengths-based lens to work with them to problem solve and identify needed resources

### Wrap Up

#### Key Learning

- **Importance of Child Maltreatment** - We hope through this training you now understand more about why child maltreatment prevention is important and your role in this process.
- **School Staff Role** - We hope you understand the responsibilities of school leaders and staff, so that staff are better able to prevent and respond to maltreatment.
- **The Impact of Reporting** - We hope you are more aware of the impact of reporting, and that you pause to include critical thinking to determine if there is reasonable cause to suspect child maltreatment and an awareness of how bias may be impacting an inclination to report.
- **Purpose and Structure of Child Welfare** - We hope you understand the purpose and structure of the child welfare system, so that you have appropriate expectations, and to improve collaboration in supporting families.
- **Understand Definitions** - We hope you understand the legal definitions of abuse and neglect, to improve accurate reporting of maltreatment, reducing over-reporting and increasing support to students through appropriate services.
- **Reporting and Supporting** - We hope you understand how to make a report and how to support families when a report is not appropriate, to better connect families to available resources.
- **Gathering Information** - We hope you have a better idea about how to engage in trauma sensitive information gathering, to reduce harm and improve reports.
- **Collaboration is essential between schools and child welfare** - Remember, local strengths, needs, policies, and priorities differ across the state. Effective prevention and intervention in child maltreatment requires school leaders to proactively and regularly connect with local child welfare professionals related to policies and processes for the mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect.
- **Thank you for all you do** - Again, thank you for all you do to positively impact children and families in Wisconsin. Do not underestimate how much you matter.