

# Keeping Girls Safe

## Overview

- Who has taken a youth safety training before? What kind?
- Please don't say it out loud, but think to yourself if you've ever had to file a report of suspect abuse before. We hope none of you have had to file this kind of report before, but this meeting is to prepare for the reality of potential dangers to our girls and what our roles are.
- This training is not a mandatory part of our adult training suggestions, however it is an important component of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America's and the Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada's strategy to protect youth from sexual abuse and other forms of mistreatment.

## Keeping Girls Safe Training Objectives

- Help protect our girls by building safety consciousness in adults and training volunteers on our [Safety Guidelines](#).
- Understanding the information about the types of abuse and abusers
- Recognizing signs of child abuse or neglect
- Maximize the protection of children by promoting prompt reporting of suspected abuse and violations of the Safety Guidelines
- Learning the proper methods for reporting suspected abuse
- Familiarize key leaders with GSSN's safety resources and their intended use in troop and service unit programs

## Statistics

*National-* Here are a few statistics to help you understand the scope of child abuse and neglect in our country ([Child Welfare 2013](#))

- Almost 5 children die every day as the result of abuse.
- A report of abuse is made every 10 seconds.
- 2.9 million cases of child abuse are reported every year in the United States.
- 90% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way; 68% are abused by family members.
- Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violence crime.
- About one-third of adults who suffered from abuse later abuse their own children.
- The estimated monetary cost resulting from child abuse and neglect for 2012 was \$124 billion.

### *Nevada*

- In 2013, Nevada had 25,086 total referrals for child abuse and neglect.
- In 2013, 5,438 children were victims of abuse or neglect in Nevada, a rate of 8.2 per 1,000 children. Of these children, 75.6% were neglected, 36.4% were physically abused, and 5.3% were sexually abused.
- The number of child victims has increased 22.4% in comparison to the number of victims in 2009.
- In 2013, 11 children in Nevada died as a result of abuse or neglect.
- Child abuse costs the state of Nevada over \$100 million a year.

## Types of Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse comes in many forms. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines types of abuse as follows:

*Child Abuse and Neglect-* any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents and imminent risk of serious harm.

*Physical Abuse*- an act which results in physical injury to a child.

*Physical neglect*- includes abandonment or inadequate supervision, and failure to provide for safety or physical needs. Includes failure to thrive, malnutrition, unsanitary conditions, or injuries from lack of supervision.

*Emotional Abuse*- Due to the nature of emotional abuse it is one of the most difficult to identify. Emotional abuse is defined as a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with a child's positive development, psyche and self-concept. Emotional abuse may take many forms including: rejection and ignoring, shame and humiliation, isolation, terrorizing and corruption (causing a child to witness or participate in criminal acts).

*Emotional neglect*- Difficult to identify, emotional neglect includes withholding of affection or attention, failure to provide psychological care, ignoring the child's emotional needs.

*Sexual Abuse*- any misuse of a child for sexual pleasure or gratification. It is the involvement of children in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, that they are unable to give informed consent to and/or that violates societal taboos. This includes inappropriate touching, indecent exposure to sexual acts or materials, and engaging a child in prostitution or pornographic photography. Allowing children to watch movies with sexual content or telling stories or jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of a child would fall into this category as well.

*Medical neglect*- includes delay or denial of dental or health care, or withholding medical care.

### **Traits of Predators**

More than 93% of the alleged predators of child abuse and neglect in Nevada were the parents or other relatives of the victims. Adults who abuse or neglect their children may show several common characteristics:

- Be isolated from the community
- Offer conflicting reasons or no explanation when questioned about a child's injuries
- It is estimated that **over 80%** of all perpetrators of abuse or neglect are under the age of 40 and that almost **2/3 are female**.
- Approximately 75% of all **neglect and medical neglect** cases are associated with female predators.
- Approximately 75% of all **sexual abuse cases** were associated with male predators.
- Adolescents, as well as adults, can be perpetrators of abuse.
- A large majority of reported abuse cases involve children under the **age of 12**.

### **Strategies Used by Predators**

Predators utilize three main strategies with children:

*Seduction*- predators usually knows the child and begins the abuse with slightly intrusive requests that gradually become more intrusive. Many times this is accompanied by threats if the child tells.

*Tricking*- diverting children away with some type of enticement. This could be offers of candy, asking a child to help find a lost dog, etc.

*Force*- this predator is usually a stranger and has to abduct the child.

#### *The Biggest Myth about Child Abuse:*

*The biggest myth is that the dangers to children come from strangers. In most cases, the predator is someone the parent or child knows, and is often trusted by the child and family.*

## **Warning Signs**

While there is no one behavior that positively indicates abuse or neglect, a combination of several might warrant contacting Child Protective Services. Warning signs might include:

- Repeated injuries that can't be well explained or are not treated
- Changes to normal demeanor (becoming aggressive or withdrawing)
- Assuming the role of a parent to younger siblings
- Sleep interrupted by nightmares, bed wetting, etc.
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in school participation (grades, extracurricular activities)

### *Physical Abuse*

Of all the types of abuse, physical abuse is probably the easiest to identify. It may consist of:

- Bruises and welts
- Burns
- Broken bones

However, many children will do their best to cover signs of abuse. They may wear long sleeves or clothing that will conceal the injuries. Their stories may be unbelievable and they may avoid any physical contact with adults or seem afraid. Children are also often late or absent from activities.

### *Physical Neglect*

Physical neglect is the failure to provide for a child's needs to the extent that there is harm or risk to the child's health or safety. Some possible signs are:

- Falling asleep during activities
- Chronic hunger
- Collecting leftovers after meals
- Coming to school early and staying late
- Squinting
- Uncleanliness
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Engaging in sexual misconduct

### *Sexual Abuse*

Some signs of sexual abuse may be:

- Unusual interest in or avoidance of all things of a sexual nature
- Sleep problems
- Depression or withdrawal from friends and family
- Seductiveness
- Truancy
- Secretiveness
- Unusual aggressiveness
- Suicidal behavior
- Bladder infections
- Difficulty walking or sitting

*Emotional Abuse*-The main indicators of emotional abuse and neglect would be extreme changes to a child's normal behavior including:

- Unpleasant attitude
- Demanding
- Unusually shy
- Avoidance
- Poor self-esteem
- Depression
- Developmental delays
- Nervous disorders

### **Knowing Your Responsibility**

#### *Responsibilities of Volunteers-*

- GSSN volunteers in Nevada and California ARE **NOT** mandated reporters, meaning they are not required by law to report suspected abuse. However, the safety of our girls is the number one focus in our program and we encourage volunteers to speak out if they have a suspicion of abuse.
- Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times. Please reference [Section 4](#) of the Volunteer Essentials for more specific details.
- Report abuse. Sexual advances, improper touching and sexual activity of any kind with girl members, as well as physical, verbal and emotional abuse of girls is strictly forbidden. Follow GSSN's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.
- Adhering to GSSN's safety ratios (At least 2 non-related volunteers at all times, learn more on [Page 55](#) of the Volunteer Essentials.)

#### *Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians-*

- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same.
- Assist in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible.
- Participate in parent/guardian meetings.
- Understand what appropriate behavior is for their daughters, as determined by the council and you.

#### *Responsibilities of Girls-*

- Assist parents and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills, to "think safely" and be prepared at all times
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when and where to get help when needed

### **Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada Safety Protocols**

**All adult leaders and youth members are responsible for the safety of girls in Girl Scouting.** Troop leadership is responsible for troop behavior management and initial response to all incidents. This includes preventing, intervening, and responding.

#### **GSSN's Guidelines for Reporting Abuse:**

In abuse incidents requiring an immediate report to the Girl Scout council, notification should occur by phone (775.322.0642) or an immediate message and follow-up to a council staff member, with submission of the **Volunteer Incident Report, form within 24 hours of an incident occurring.**

## What is NOT required

- **Investigating** possible abuse or neglect
- **Intervening** in a situation
- **Notifying** the parents with the intention of fixing the situation yourself. Again, volunteers are not to do anything except report the incident to council.

## Be Prepared

Make notes for yourself before informing a Girl Scout staff member. Write out the situation so that you have time to think about the facts and reasons for suspicion.

Have as much information on the child as you can (name, address, age, parents' names, siblings, current location of the child, etc.)

***\*Leaders should NOT approach the parent (or other) who is suspected of abuse/neglect. The child could end up facing consequences like being pulled from Girl Scouts, punishment or further abuse.***

## Legal Protection

The following protections apply to persons who make reports:

- Immunity from civil and criminal liability
- Information gathered is protected
- May make a report without giving you name
- You have the right to receive information on the litigation. You will be asked if you wish to be contacted again.

## What Will CPS Do?

CPS employees will ask several questions to help them determine the risk to the child.

They will conduct an assessment or investigation dependent on the information provided. Each case is given a priority rating which determines the response time.

If necessary for the child's safety, he or she will be removed from the home. CPS will offer services to help the family that will make the child safe so that he or she can remain in the home.

If you would like additional information on the CPS processes, please visit the [DCFS website](#).

County	Contact	County	Contact
Alpine	530.694.2235	Lyon	775.577.5009
Carson City	775.684.2200	Mineral	775.945.4653
Churchill	775.423.6561	Modoc	530.233.6501
Douglas	775.782.9825	Mono	760.932.7755
El Dorado/Placerville	530.642.7100	Nevada	530.273.4291
El Dorado/South Lake Tahoe	530.573.3201	Pershing	775.273.2342
Elko	775.753.1300	Placer	916.872.6549
Eureka	775.237.6128	Plumas	530.283.6350
Humboldt	707.445.6180	Sierra	530.993.6700
Inyo	1.866.901.3212	Storey	775.847.0959
Lander	775.635.2619	Washoe	775.337.4400
Lassen	530.251.8277	White Pine	775.289.1640

## Resources-

- [Volunteer Essentials 2015/2016](#)
- [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)
- [GSSN Incident Report](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- [How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment](#)
- [Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [Nevada DCFS](#)
- [Background Check](#)