



DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**To:** Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care Programs  
Program Directors/Site Directors/ Network Coordinators

**From:** Madeline Cancel-Hanieh *MCH*  
Director  
Children Services Division

**Date:** August 18, 2016

**Subject:** CHILD ABUSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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This memorandum serves as a reminder to all Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Head Start/Early Head Start and Child Care agencies to ensure that all programs meet federal, state and city guidelines on Child Abuse and Neglect. Please see the list of guidelines below.

In accordance with federal, state and city regulations, it is the responsibility of the delegate agency to implement the appropriate written policies and procedures that include the following:

**I. Personnel Policies Regarding Staff Recruitment and Selection**

- Before staff, consultants or regular volunteers are hired; the delegate agency will conduct a state and/or national criminal background check, as required by state law or administrative requirements.
- Agencies will screen childcare workers through the "Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System" (CANTS) prior to permanent employment.
- Agencies will require a declaration from all prospective employees prior to employment. The declaration must list all:
  - Pending and prior criminal arrests and charges related to child sexual abuse and their disposition.
  - Convictions related to other forms of child abuse and/or neglect.
  - Convictions of violent felonies.
- Prior to employment, individuals must be interviewed. Personal and professional references must be checked.
- Prospective employees must be cleared through the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS)

**All employees on the HS/EHS budget must have a cleared Criminal Background Check prior to hire completed by the Illinois State Police.**

- II. All agencies will provide orientation for new staff and annually training will be provided for all staff on their role as “Mandated Reporters” and on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect cases. To enhance ongoing training opportunities at the delegate level, the designated agency may seek assistance from the Mental Health Consultant to provide training to staff and parents on early identification, symptoms of abuse/neglect and intervention strategies for children and families who are victims of child abuse/neglect.

In addition, an orientation for parents and teachers must be provided regarding the need to protect their children from child abuse/neglect and inappropriate discipline techniques. Staff must complete an annual Mandated Reporter Training online and provide Human Resources (HR) with a copy of the certificate and maintain a copy for their personal records.

**III. Child Abuse/Neglect policies that include a written plan for responding to suspected or known physical/sexual abuse or neglect of children, whether it occurs inside or outside the program. Please use the following to outline your plan:**

- Identify the steps the delegate agency will take to report incidents.
- Identify who is responsible for contacting The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and DFSS.
- Designate a staff member, who will have the responsibility for handling all aspects pertaining to child abuse and neglect cases for the site, most often, it is the Site Director.

**IV. Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect should contain the following information, if known:**

- Name and address of child and parent or person responsible for child’s care.
- Child’s age and date of birth.
- Nature and extent of the suspected abuse, including any evidence of previous abuse.
- Explanation given for the suspected abuse.
- Possible date(s) that of occurrence.
- Any other information that might be helpful in establishing cause of the abuse and identity of the abuser.

Be mindful of DCFS policies on “interrogating” children. Extensive interviews of a child about an abuse incident can traumatize the child and have a negative impact on the investigation. After the report is made a trained professional interviewer will conduct an interview of the child. Multiple interviews of a child can be traumatizing and should be avoided.

A copy of the plans and procedures that have been developed for screening staff and for identifying and reporting possible abuse and neglect cases must be made available for review by DFSS staff. These plans and procedures will need **annual** review by delegate agency staff and parents to ascertain if they are being followed and whether modification is needed.

Attached is a copy of the Department of Children and Family Services *Acknowledgment of Mandated Reported Status*, which must be completed and signed by all childcare and education staff, prior to hiring. A copy of this form must be included in the employee's file.

If you have any questions, please contact LaTrice Berry, Supervisor of Children's Service Programs at 312-743-1690 or email –[Latrice.Berry@cityofchicago.org](mailto:Latrice.Berry@cityofchicago.org)

Thank you for your continued support on behalf of children and families.

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