

Breaking the Silence
Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Training
Scenario 3-Response

The Cool Volunteer (EL)

INITIAL ACTIONS

The safety and well-being of every student must be the first and foremost priority for all educators. Immediate action should be taken to bring the matter to the attention of the site administrator to protect any student from any situation which threatens the student's safety or well-being. For example, the school may initiate volunteer consequences, student safety plans, etc.

This scenario may involve "grooming" or adult sexual misconduct, and it also involves Code of Conduct with Students violation. Accordingly, a SCAR may be filed with a CPA. Also, since the allegations involve suspected abuse by a volunteer, these SCAR reports are generally filed with local law enforcement.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. GROOMING OR ADULT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

As described below, this inappropriate conduct violates the Code of Conduct with Students policy, and it may also rise to the level of suspected child abuse regardless of gender or job title. For example, in an attempt to gain trust and confidence, a perpetrator may engage in "grooming" or adult sexual misconduct, that is, physical or non-physical activity directed to a student, the student's parents, or other adults with the purpose of developing a sexual or romantic relationship with the minor.

As described herein, grooming activities vary but generally methodically increase over time and allow a groomer to test their targets as to gauging acceptance and silence at each step. Children who are victims of adult misconduct may feel conflicted about the situation, especially if people they trust, such as school staff or other adults working with students (teacher/volunteer/classroom assistant/employee of school), are implicated.

Grooming activities may be done privately or publicly and gradually progress to sexualized behaviors. Signs that may signify grooming include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Touching that is intimate or sexual in nature;
- (2) Personal or social media interaction with a student without others' knowledge or supervision;
- (3) Meeting a student away from school grounds or hours;
- (4) Giving gifts or spending extra time with a student in nonsexual ways; and
- (5) Sexual or personal oral or written comments made to a student.

Also, adults who engage in grooming may exhibit some of the following behaviors: Testing boundaries of students to determine whom to target or who is a vulnerable student; trying to build a more personal relationship with the student, such as telling the student personal stories and involving student personal matters (e.g., favors/errands); discouraging the student from sharing with others; acting in a manner to manipulate student's affection; engaging in intimidation and threats to silence and isolate student.

Based on the above, an employee with reasonable suspicion of child abuse must file a SCAR without further questioning. Also, pursuant to policy, an employee must inform their site administrator of these

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allegations of inappropriate conduct because the District administrator is obligated to:

- (1) Stop the misconduct, if any;
- (2) Investigate the misconduct, if any; and
- (3) Take appropriate administrative and/or disciplinary action, if warranted.

In general, if you, however, do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse you may ask clarifying questions to determine whether or not suspected abuse exists. Also, if based upon the initial information you receive, you do not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you may call and consult with the CPA and inform your site administrator of the inappropriate employee (or adult working with student) conduct. Although some grooming types of conduct may not be criminal, they often violate other laws and professional codes of conduct in the educational setting.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT WITH STUDENTS

Although Jimmy is a volunteer, this scenario is an example of a Code of Conduct with Student violation. Pursuant to the District's Volunteer policy, volunteers are expected to follow the student's code of conduct. For example, the following violates District policy:

- (1) Communicating with students for purposes that are not specifically school-related; and
- (2) Communicating with students at home or cell phone with matters that are not school-related.

Thus, this scenario violates the District's *Code of Conduct with Students*.

With volunteers, schools should enforce clear boundaries between volunteering and how the volunteers communicate with students. Communications should be school-related and should not be overly personal to the extent manifested in the scenario and on personal electronic devices, such as by cell phone texts. If the communications are overly explicit and personal, this could raise suspicion of suspected child abuse.