



To Hug or Not To Hug (EL)

You observe that Ms. J is a popular teacher assistant. She is often seen chitchatting and playfully joking with students in the halls and in a classroom after school. It is common for her to greet students with a hug or a pat on the back. The principal has cautioned her about hugging students many times, but she responded that other staff members hug students. A student who is often isolated and moping around the school has complained to you that Ms. J's physical contact makes him feel awkward, especially when no one is around. He said that these "alone" hugs are longer than normal. Also, the student showed you an iPad that Ms. J gave him for his birthday.

Discussion Questions

1. What initial actions would you take?
2. Is this enough information for reasonable suspicion of child abuse? If not, what clarifying questions would you ask?
3. What possible concerns arise from this scenario? How does this situation become a violation of law or district policy?

Keep in Mind

District Policy

All employees with reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect *must* report the suspected abuse or neglect to a Child Protective Agency (CPA) pursuant to the *Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Requirements* bulletin.

Reasonable Suspicion Definition

Reasonable suspicion means it is reasonable for a person, based on the person's training, education, and experience, to entertain a suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Clarifying Questions

An employee who does not have reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect may ask clarifying questions to determine whether or not suspected abuse or neglect exists. If an employee, however, does have reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect, the employee *must* file a SCAR without further questioning. Also, an employee with reasonable suspicion *must* file SCAR even if the CPA states "handle it administratively."

Required Steps for Filing a SCAR

Filing a SCAR consists of two steps:

- (1) Telephone call *must* be made immediately, or as soon as practically possible to a CPA; and
- (2) Written report *must* be filed with a CPA within 36 hours of receiving the information. The CPA will either be the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) or the local law enforcement. Generally, SCARs are filed with DCFS if the alleged perpetrator is in the home, and if the allegations involve an out-of-home perpetrator (e.g., employee), the SCARs are filed with local law enforcement (e.g., LAPD).