

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

As an early childhood teacher, you are required to report any suspected neglect or abuse - and must do so within 72 hours. Failure to report suspected child abuse could result in a penalty including, but not limited to, a monetary fine. Persons reporting their suspicions are immune from civil and criminal liability.

As a member of the RCC community, all staff are required to report any suspected abuse/neglect immediately to the Director or other available administrator. This is an important -and necessary - first step toward protecting a child who might be in danger. The Administrator will then partner with the teacher in ensuring the documentation is filed and made available to Child Protective Services (CPS).

The abused or neglected child includes any child under 18 years of age whose parent or other guardian/adult:

- *cause or threatens to cause a physical or mental injury;**
- *neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision for the child's level of development;**
- *abandons the child;**
- *commits or allows any illegal sexual act: incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or the use of children in sexually explicit visual material.**

Signs of child abuse and neglect include:

- *the child tells you about an abusive or neglectful situation;**
- *the child displays excessive anxiety;**
- *there are bruises or injuries after an absence;**
- *there are sudden changes in the child's behavior;**
- *the child frequently complains of pain and/or injury without apparent injury or illness;**
- *the child turns to strangers indiscriminately for affection;**
- *the child does not look to the parents for relief from discomfort;**
- *the child appears frightened of parents/caretakers;**
- *the child seems afraid to go home;**
- *the child rationalizes excessive punishment by saying, "I'm bad. I deserve it".**
- *the child displays destructive or cruel behavior;**
- *the child re-enacts the abuse using dolls, drawings, or friends;**
- *the child has detailed and age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior;**
- *the child wears clothes inappropriate to the weather to cover body; or**
- *the child displays consistent hunger and/or poor hygiene.**

After CPS receives a valid report, they will assess the situation to determine if there is immediate danger to the child. IF that is the case, they then have a number of options, including working out a plan with the family to protect the child and help the parents solve the problems which are leading to abuse or neglect.

As partners with our families, we are also able and encouraged to work with the family directly. From a supportive, not a judgmental place, just continue to reassure your families that we are partners in ensuring "our" children grow up healthy and happy - and we want to provide whatever guidance or resources will support our shared goal.