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Team Tailgate

Reporting Child Neglect & Abuse

A mandated reporter is an individual who is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant supervisors or authorities. A cornerstone policy of the Boys & Girls Club of America and our Antelope Valley Boys & Girls Club is for our staff to comply with **Penal Code Section 11166** of the **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act**. According to the CDC, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 20 boys will experience some form of child abuse or assault before their 18th birthday. Child abuse is more prevalent than people realize, and as staff members, it is our duty to report our club members when there is suspected abuse. It is important to have information on resources regarding mental health, crisis counseling, and other accessible learning centers for well-being topics.

Please keep in mind that the following helplines have information and resources that are intended for people of all ages in all situations.

Here are a few helpful hotlines to keep in mind:

National Child Abuse Hotline

(800) 422-4453 | ChildhelpHotline.org | Childhelp.org

Childhelp is a nonprofit organization that has been dedicated to preventing child abuse since the 1950s. They have impacted over 11 million children's lives over the last 63 years.

- Provides 24/7 anonymous and confidential online and offline chat services with professional crisis counselors, crisis intervention, information, and referrals to emergency services, social services, and support resources.
- Shares information on signs of child abuse/neglect, how to report it, what comes next, and so much more.
- Provides online resources such as informational links, defining what child abuse is, child abuse/neglect prevention, and more.

Child Safety Helpline

(866) 607-7233 | bgca.org/about-us/child-safety | SafeClub@Praesidiuminc.com

The Boys and Girls Club of America partnered with Praesidium to provide a confidential child safety helpline. This helpline provides anonymous access for parents, employees, and children to report suspicious or inappropriate behavior regarding children.

Ethics Point Hotline

(866) 295-3701 | Ethicspoint.com

Provides employees, volunteers, and parents anonymous reporting of any unethical or illegal workplace activities.

Crisis Text Line

Text ‘CLUB’ or ‘HOME’ to 741741 | [Crisistextline.org](https://crisistextline.org)

The Crisis Text Line is in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of America and is designed to offer free 24/7 support through text messaging.

- Provides support in de-escalating situations and providing action plans.
- Can initiate a “Live Rescue,” which alerts emergency services to the location of the text message.
- Helps in situations of gun violence, anxiety, eating disorders, depression, suicide, self-harm, and more.

Department of Mental Health Helpline

(800) 854-7771 | [Dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now](https://dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now)

The LA County Department of Mental Health has a helpline that serves as the primary point for mental health services. This helpline offers three (3) different services/options:

Access Line

- Available 24/7 for service referrals, Crisis Assessments, and Field Deployments.

Emotional Support

- Open from 10:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Provides trained active listeners

Veteran Line

- Open from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Offers mental health support/connections for veterans and their families

UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence (COE)

[Wellbeing4la.org](https://wellbeing4la.org)

The UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence was designed to support the well-being of our community’s mental health by providing both physical and online training and coaching.

Here are some of the topics they focus on for support:

- Trauma and Resilience
- Informed Care
- Professional Wellbeing
- Early Childhood
- Positive School Environments
- Youth and Family Resilience
- Crisis Response

AVBGC Child Abuse Prevention Policy

It is AVBGC policy that all employees shall comply with state law regarding child abuse reporting. Pursuant to State law and AVBGC policy, ALL AVBGC employees are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect. State law applies to ALL AVBGC employees, including: certificated employees, employees of child care centers, instructional aides, teachers’ aides.

Definitions:

- **Physical Abuse** – Physical injury (external or internal) **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual assault or sexual exploitation.
- **Neglect** – The negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare.
- **Willful Cruelty or Unjustifiable Punishment** – A situation where any person willfully causes, inflicts or permits unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or a caregiver willfully causes or permits the child to be placed in a situation in which the child's person or health is endangered.
- **Mental Suffering, Emotional Well-Being** – Any mandated reporter who has knowledge of or who reasonably suspects that mental suffering has been inflicted upon a child or that his or her emotional well-being is endangered in any way may report the known or suspected instance or child abuse.

Reporting Procedures: Must report immediately with the following: 1) a telephone report and 2) a written report. The written report must be mailed within 36 hours. Suspected child abuse reports and information contained therein are confidential.

Recognizing Child Abuse/Neglect

According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (childwelfare.gov), there are ways you can recognize child abuse and child neglect.

Here are a few signs to look out for:

Consider the possibility when the child:

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Unexplained burns, bruises, broken bones, etc.
- The child seems frightened of the parent(s) or going home
- Frequently absent from school
- Is constantly dirty and has severe body odor
- Abuses alcohol or drugs/Attempted suicide
- Experiences behavior changes such as:
 - Stress or distress
 - Chronic stomach pains
 - Headaches
 - Anxiety
 - Bullying or being bullied
 - Self-harm or threat of self-harm

Consider the possibility when the parent or guardian:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs
- Parent(s) using harsh physical discipline with the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problem

How to Prevent and Protect Members from Abuse

As staff, it is important to follow the protocol of creating a safe environment and observing interactions between members and staff for any out-of-line behavior. Any inappropriate movements, gestures, or actions should not be tolerated and should be reported to a supervisor, parents, and, if need be, the authorities. If you feel a member is a victim, create a safe space where they feel they can express their thoughts. As a staff member, if a member decides to confide in you, validate and listen to their feelings and respond with empathy to validate their feelings. Reassure the members that staff are there to support them instead of lecturing them. If the allegations revealed have merit, then as a mandated reporter, you should consult directly with your supervisor to report the incidents that were discussed to the appropriate authorities. Every issue and allegation should be taken seriously and should not be written off as “kids being kids” or “playing around” between members or staff.

Setting clear standards for what is considered appropriate, respectful behavior, staying alert for situations where those expectations are broken, and speaking up promptly to address any concerns are the cornerstones of any effective effort to protect children. Talking to children about their activities, hopes, and anxieties on a daily basis increases the likelihood that a child who is worried about their own behavior will be able to tell someone. The sooner you recognize potentially concerning situations, the better-protected children will be.

If You Suspect It, Report It!

If you are unsure about any situation involving child abuse or neglect, please contact your supervisor as soon as possible and refer to the Employee Handbook. Remember, the safety and well-being of our members start with you.