

# A Best Friend's Quandary

## The Scenario:

A volunteer, who helps students with homework, comes to you about a dilemma. A tutee confided that, though her friend, Marvin, made her promise to keep it a secret, he was having problems at home. Marvin's mother is taking drugs and is hardly ever home. Marvin, the oldest child, is always trying to take care of his younger siblings. The children do not have money and they often go without food. The tutee doesn't want to get anyone in trouble, but wants to help her friend. The volunteer wants to know what to tell the tutee. What do you do?

## Discussion Begins

## What do you do?

**What do you tell the volunteer?**

**Do you report?** If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to Marvin and his siblings? To the concerned friend? To the volunteer? To you? To your school? To LAUSD?

If you report and the Local Law Enforcement Agency or the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) tells you...

...to **handle it administratively**, what do you do next?

...**they will investigate**, what do you do next?



## Legal Response

Neglect includes any act or lack of action by a person responsible for the child that results in the child being harmed or being put at risk for harm. The negligent treatment of a child by a person responsible for the welfare of the child constitutes child abuse.

Neither you nor the volunteer may investigate the volunteer's report. However, you may ask Marvin a clarifying question such as "I heard that you may be facing some challenges at home. What is happening?" If there is reasonable suspicion that child abuse occurred, a Suspected Child Abuse Report must be filed with either the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or the Local Law Enforcement Agency.

### Other Considerations

Volunteers are not mandated reporters and are not required to file a Suspected Child Abuse Report. Here, s/he has correctly reported the information to a mandated reporter.

### Listen

You may or may not have a strong emotional reaction (i.e., anger, sadness, guilt). However, listen to the interaction to be able to recall the exact language used. You may want to take notes to help with remembering details.

### Protect

The situation must be addressed by following the legal response. Doing so is the best way to protect students and promote a safe learning environment. Encourage the volunteer to continue to be a supportive presence in the tutee's life.

### Connect

Convey concern for the student's well-being to certificated staff. Every school site has protocols, systems, and resources to support and address student safety and well-being. This is an opportunity to become familiar with and use the procedures, policies, and resources at your work site.

### Model

Maintain a professional and calm level of emotions and reactions. Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.

### Teach

Inform the volunteer that by reporting her/his concern, s/he acted in the best interest of the child.

**Emotional Support**