

Home Alone

The Scenario:

You are told that a 4th grade student is left home alone five nights a week. His mother works the night shift and does not return home until 8 a.m. Because there is no supervision, the 4th grader roams the streets and hangs out with the neighborhood teenagers until late in the night. As a result, the child comes to school late every day in dirty clothes, hungry, and extremely tired. What do you do?

Discussion Begins

What do you do?

Do you report? If so, to whom? If so, when? If you don't, what might happen to the student? 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 children by a person responsible for the welfare of the children constitutes child abuse.

You may not conduct a child abuse investigation. You may ask clarifying questions 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.

Listen

Hearing that a student is being left unsupervised can elicit a strong emotional reaction (i.e., anger, sadness, or guilt). However, listen carefully 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.

Connect

Convey concern for the student’s well-being. 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 your source that, by reporting her/his concern, s/he acted in the best interests of the child.

Emotional Support