

Factors That Lead to Child Abuse and Neglect in Institutions

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- A. The institution itself can play a significant role in contributing to the abuse and/or neglect of children. Some key issues in deciding an institution's involvement and culpability in an incident of child abuse and/or neglect depend on whether or not the institution has developed policies and procedures, adequately trained staff, and, when appropriate, provided children and their families with the institution's written policies, procedures and practices relating to the following:
- ♦ Program description and population to be served;
 - ♦ Current service plan for each child, the engagement of each person responsible for service delivery, including child care staff, and the mechanisms for evaluating and updating service plans;
 - ♦ Rights of children and their families and a grievance/reporting system when they feel their rights have been violated;
 - ♦ Expectations of the children and their families;
 - ♦ Discipline of children;
 - ♦ Problem management, physical restraint, time out and isolation;
 - ♦ Staffing patterns/coverage requirements which include action plans for staff absences, emergencies, planned or respite breaks from children and integration and assignment of new employees, especially child care staff;
 - ♦ Staff job descriptions, staff behavioral guidelines/expectations, staff evaluations, possible corrective or disciplinary actions for staff and staff grievance procedures;
 - ♦ Staff orientation and their ongoing training plan;
 - ♦ Supervision of all levels of staff, including chain of command for the institution according to the table of organization;
 - ♦ Required written/oral communications/reports and their time frames;
 - ♦ Medical care, routine and emergency, for children;
 - ♦ Safe keeping, transporting and dispensing of medications;
 - ♦ Use of psychotropic medications;
 - ♦ Reporting and maintenance system for hazardous conditions on grounds, in buildings or with equipment, including vehicles.
- B. Common Situations That Can Lead to Institutional Abuse
- ♦ When staff are not given training on how to control a child who is verbally or physically aggressive;
 - ♦ When staff are not provided with training and instruction on how to break up fights between children;
 - ♦ When staff are not provided with training on how to redirect a child who refuses to follow

instructions;

- ◆ When the institution fails to provide the type of program that is needed for the population they serve;
- ◆ When an institution provides no means for staff, who have had a heated interchange with a child, to remove themselves from the situation in order to regain self control.
- ◆ When special needs children or medically and/or behaviorally challenged children are placed with foster parents who have not received training on how to address the extraordinary needs the child presents.

C. Common Situations That Lead to Sexual Abuse

- ◆ When there are no policies or procedures provided by the institution regarding staff removing a child(ren) from their living unit;
- ◆ When the institution does not provide supervision to children during sleeping hours.

D. Common Situations Which Can Lead to Neglect

- ◆ When the institution's staffing patterns and coverage requires persons to work longer shifts;
- ◆ When the institution does not make provisions for supervision of child care staff on a unit and, as a result, staff sleep, are under the influence of drugs/alcohol, or are engaged in other duties outside their work assignments while on the job;
- ◆ When the institution lacks clear guidelines on the safekeeping of medication or the dispensing of medication, and as a result, there is misuse of medication by children;
- ◆ When staff do not supervise children, ignore or fail to remedy a problem.
- ◆ When staff are not trained on how to handle a medical emergency.

E. Common Situations Which Lead to Emotional Abuse and Neglect

- ◆ When a child is chronically ridiculed;
- ◆ When favoritism is shown towards one particular child;
- ◆ When one or more children are picked out as being un-likeable and no one recognizes or handles these feelings or actions;
- ◆ When promises are made to a child(ren) which cannot be fulfilled.