UNDERSTANDING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS AND CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER’S
This workshop has been created to help Teachers and elected School Child Protection Officers in South Africa with the reporting process after a child has disclosed abuse

*as required by the*

*Department of Education and the South African Child Act,*

which in brief states

“….. The South African Child Act has been established to promote the protection, development and well-being of a child”

In other words, the interests of a child are PARAMOUNT and to disregard this is a criminal offence.
“As adults we play an unwitting role in abuse......
If you are not protecting children you are neglecting them,
and that too is abuse!”
WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

• PHYSICAL:
  the intentional hitting; beating; biting; shaking or burning of a child

• EMOTIONAL:
  the shaming; blaming or belittling of a child including excessive shouting or yelling

• NEGLECT:
  Failure of a parent/guardian to provide a constant source of food; shelter; medical care as well as a pattern of failure to meet a child’s emotional needs in the form of affection; attention; comfort; routine; discipline and supervision

• SEXUAL:
  Forced sexual activity, including incest and bestiality; exposure to sexual stimulation not appropriate for the child’s age and exposure to sexual language and/or pornography
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT?

• SEXUAL ASSAULT
  Inappropriate touching; fondling (caressing; petting; stroking); showing of pornography, masturbation in front of the child, or any other act of a sexual nature.

• RAPE
  NON-CONSENSUAL (without agreement/forced)
  Forced sexual penetration of any object or body part into another’s orifice (openings)
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT?

• WHAT IS CONSENSUAL SEX?
  Intercourse between two people, both over the age of 16, where both parties agree to have sex.

• SO WHAT IS RAPE?
  ABSENCE OF CONSENT: A person not mentally sound, conscious or able to agree to sex
  BODY: Insertion of any object or body part of a human or animal in any genital organ or anus of another against their will
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT?

• 3RD PARTY
  Forcing a person to have sex with another person against their will

• FORCED CONSENT
  Intimidating or threatening someone to have sex with you. An abuse of power in the form of using authority or rank for forced sex.

• PORNOGRAPHY
  The making of and/or possession of child pornography (photo’s or videos)
SIGNS OF MOLESTATION

• PHYSICAL SIGNS
  Blood on underwear
  Female minor missing a period
  Pregnancy in a minor
  Blood, pain, discharge, itching in the genital area
  Abnormal way of sitting or walking
  Sudden soiling of pants
  Sudden ailments (tummy aches, headaches)
SIGNS OF MOLESTATION

• EMOTIONAL SIGNS
  Sudden aggressive behaviour (biting; shouting; hitting)
  Breaking items, being destructive and disruptive
  Stealing
  Lying
  Cheating
  Under of over eating
  Acting provocatively
  Excessive crying
  Increase in temper tantrums
  Withdrawal in an outgoing child
  Fear of a familiar adult
  Depression
  Disgust in body or gender
DISCLOSURE

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DISCLOSURE?
When a minor reveals information, or confesses, or admits sexual abuse has taken place.

My son was going to graduate from kindergarten, we had a party. One little girl did not want to go home ....... I didn’t know the child. She was crying and carrying on – I told the teacher my suspicions based on the child’s remarks. The teacher, who had her own suspicions, notified Child Protection Services and the boyfriend was removed from the family home. Children **DO TELL** ..... you just have to **LISTEN** to them!!!
HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THE AWKWARDNESS OF DISCLOSURE?

• Gently remove the child from the area
• Do not be judgemental
• Be genuine in your sympathy towards them
• Listen to what the child recounts! You may be asked to give a statement to the police
• Ask questions to clarify but do not as LEADING questions
• Don’t urge the child to forget
• Prepare yourself for an ‘ab reaction’ from the child
• Don’t make promises you cannot keep
• Reassure the child
WORDS OF SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD

• I’m glad you were brave enough to tell me
• I BELIEVE YOU, and I am going to do my best to help you
• This is not your fault
• Crying is good for you, don’t feel bad about crying
• If you are angry it’s ok
• You may feel you may never be happy again but you won’t be this sad forever
• The person who did this needs help, just like we need to get help for you.
• Will you trust me to help you?
YOUR EMOTIONS

• You may feel shocked
• You will most undoubtedly feel anger, shock, horror
• You will need to talk to someone about how you feel
• Contact a counsellor, pastor, chaplain or social worker

The rape or abuse of a child is bigger than you, you will need to express your emotions in order to put things back into perspective.
AFTER DISCLOSURE

• Encourage parents to allow their child to continue their normal routine as much as possible
• Understand the child will have angry outbursts. This is their release valve. Encourage the child to express their anger in sports to alleviate the aggression.
• Discipline and routine is important in an abused child’s life. They cannot be allowed to disrupt their classmates
• Don’t allow the child to hear you discussing the matter with anyone
• Answer any question the child may ask truthfully but always in confidence
“Those who said it can’t be done ….. shouldn’t get in my way while I am doing it!”

Rosetta. D. Hoesslie, Falling through Ice
(reporting child abuse)
REPORTING ABUSE

Within the first 72 hours after abuse

• Do not remove any clothing from the child. Allow the child to show you their injury on their own accord
• Do not attempt to wash or clean the child
• Do not call other’s to see the injury or parade the child in front of others
• Do not panic – reassure the child
• Act confidently
• Truthfully explain to the child what needs to be done to get them help
• Never Lie to the child
REPORTING ABUSE
Within the first 72 hours after abuse

• Report incident to Principal
• Contact the Department of Basic Education’s Social Worker
• Contact the police, preferably the FCS Unit (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit)
• Contact the parent or guardian. They must be present when the child speaks to the police.
REPORTING ABUSE
Who speaks to the child?

• The first reporter.  
  This is the person the child first disclosed to
• The SAPS Investigating Officer
• The Social Worker who specialises in assessments
• The Magistrate
REPORTING ABUSE

Long term abuse

• Report the incident to the Principal
• If the school has a Social Worker refer the child immediately to her/him
• Contact the Department of Basic Education’s Social Worker to report the abuse
• Contact the Police (preferably the FCS Unit)
• Contact the parents/guardian
CONCEPTS OF TEACHING CHILDREN AWARENESS

• Become better informed, educate yourself
• Report Rape and Assault
• Find out where to get help
• Teach children to speak out (see exercise on Networking Safe Adults)
• Talk seriously, honestly and openly
• Introduce a password
NETWORKING ‘SAFE ADULTS’

Exercise

Ask your learners to trace their hand on a piece of blank paper. Each of the fingers they have traced must be coloured in a different colour. Ask them to pick a ‘safe adult’ for at least two or three fingers, they must write who the adult is in each finger chosen, i.e. Grandmother, aunt, uncle, teacher, best friend’s parent, their own parents, etc. It must be an adult they can trust with anything.

Keep a copy of the hand in the child’s file and obtain contact details for each of the adults the child has chosen. The original hand can go home with the child for future reference.
In America a stranger approached an 8 year old boy and asked him to go with him. The stranger told the boy that something had happened and his Mum had sent him to fetch the boy. The boy asked the stranger for the PASSWORD and he used the man’s confusion to run away. He and his Mum had agreed on a password in case she ever had to send someone to collect him from school. It may well have saved his life. It is such a quick and easy way to prevent possible tragedy.
IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Please make a list of important telephone numbers:

• Your local Child Welfare Office
• The South African Police Service: Your local station, sector vehicle, FCS Unit
• Department of Basic Education (Supervising Social Worker)
• Community Policing Forums
• Rape Crisis Clinics
• Hospitals
• Life Line and other Counselling services
Statistics show us that an offender/sexual predator will have molested/abused 5 – 6 children before he/she is caught and imprisoned.

Let us be more alert to the signs of molestation so that we can put these monsters behind bars before they are able to re-offend.
In a time like this parents are expected to provide a solid, unified front to help their child through the trauma when their own world has been turned upside down. Often time’s parents are so overwhelmed, outraged and distressed they have no idea where to go for help or what to do. They go charging off in different directions, not gaining any ground and this leads to unnecessary anxiety and stress.
HOW DO WE SUPPORT THE PARENTS?

• Consult with the parents as soon as possible after the incident. The sooner parents are equipped with the necessary information the sooner they are able to stabilise their own emotions and concentrate on their child. (Trauma Debriefing)
• Provide the parents with a list of resources who can assist during this period.
• Use this consultation to assist them with referrals to people who are able to advise on legal and procedural requirements
• Allow parents to discuss their feelings and emotions. Offer no suggestions at this time – this period is for them to vocalise exactly how they feel.
• Mediation and education on offender’s behaviours is important. Stress the importance of them providing a united front against the offender
RHINO AND ELEPHANT© ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM

The program is about educating parents, teachers and children on protective behaviours and the procedures to follow after the disclosure of abuse
RHINO AND ELEPHANT© ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Children are taught through a sensitively designed play about hygiene, ‘special openings’ and networking ‘safe adults’. The topic; although hugely controversial; is not graphic in its detail and children who have not been exposed to abuse will take with them the lessons they understood from the play, however, children who have been abused will understand the message of the play and will know who to talk to about the incident without fear of reprisal and with the confidence that something concrete and positive will be done to assist them.
RHINO AND ELEPHANT© ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Teachers and parents are taught to speak the ‘same language’, that is, when the Rhino and Elephant© play is given to the child, whatever lesson’s the child takes home with them or into the class after the play is understood by all and issues are easily addressed without causing undue embarrassment, anxiety, trauma or stress to child, parent and teacher. To be forewarned is to be forearmed - the program not only educates but undertakes to give everyone involved the necessary tools to cope with the crisis that comes with disclosure.
RHINO AND ELEPHANT© ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Through this program we will identify and train a Child Protection Officer in your child’s school, this is a person your child knows and trusts should they not be able to tell you about any abuse that is taking place. The Child Protection Officer will act on your child’s behalf by seeing to it that the appropriate and correct procedures are followed and immediate help can be offered to you and your child.

We know it is not possible to be everywhere in order to protect our child and this is why we have introduced the Child Protection Officers in schools to help.
RHINO AND ELEPHANT© ABUSE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Once Child Protection Officers have been identified and trained we will educate the parents on the indicators of abuse and the procedures to follow after a disclosure. We will also explain the Rhino and Elephant© play to them so that they fully understand the concept of the play and will be in a position to talk about preventative and protective behaviours with their children.

If everyone in a child’s life is forearmed with information to combat child abuse we will, collectively, be in a position to put a halt to child abuse.