Welcome to the University of Washington’s Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect awareness training program.

This program is intended to provide an overview of your responsibilities in accordance with the Washington state Abuse of Children law and University of Washington Executive Order 56, Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.

The reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect is an important part of the University of Washington’s Safety of Minors program.

Please keep in mind a couple of things regarding this training:

First, a note on terminology. In this training we use the terms ‘minor,’ ‘youth’ and ‘child’ interchangeably.

In all cases we are referring to anyone under the age of 18 years old.

Second, participants should be aware that the University of Washington reserves the right to modify, add and delete content of this program as necessary without notice.

You may contact the Office for Youth Programs Development and Support for the most current information, or with further questions about this training content.

Here we see the University of Washington’s core values of:

Integrity
Diversity
Excellence
Collaboration
Innovation and
Respect.

In alignment with these values, and as a public university, we are deeply committed to our community. Minors are a part of the University community.

On campus, you may find youth visiting on a field trip, touring campus, or participating in special academic programs and events sponsored by various departments.
During the summer, we play host to thousands of youth from pre-school through high school who participate in summer programs and camps.

UW engages with approximately 94,000 youth each year!

Whether on or off campus, protecting the youth in our midst from harm is a vital part of achieving our mission and core values.

Today we will demonstrate how compliance with our state and university child abuse and neglect reporting requirements is essential to maintaining an environment where all members of our community are free to safely access the programs available at the University of Washington.

This training module is comprised of four sections:

One - Laws and policies that address reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Two - Definitions of child abuse and neglect

Three - Steps to take to make a report.

And Four - Available resources and contacts to support you in making a successful report.

In this section we will briefly cover the laws and policies that provide the guiding framework for the University of Washington’s requirements for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

There has been a comprehensive federal law in place since 1974, called the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. This act funds activities for states to address issues of child abuse and neglect.

Each state is required to have a system to respond to allegations of child abuse or neglect.

In Washington State, Child Protective Services, part of the Department of Social and Health Services, investigates reports of child abuse or neglect involving a parent or guardian. Law enforcement also plays a role in responding to reports of child abuse or neglect that are criminal in nature. We will discuss this further later on in this training.

In Washington State, the Abuse of Children Law, Revised Code of Washington (or RCW) Chapter 26.44, mandates that people who are in positions to identify when children are at risk of abuse or neglect or are victims of abuse or neglect to report this information to the proper authorities.

State laws include specific definitions of abuse and neglect, as well as outline specific requirements for reporting to the authorities. There are protections included for those who report 'in good faith' as well as
consequences for failing to make a report or knowingly making a false report. We will discuss specifically how this law is implemented in our university setting in the next section.

In 2012, the Washington State law was amended to include employees of higher education as mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect.

The University of Washington policy that communicates the requirements of this law and expectations for the UW community is Executive Order 56, titled Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.

Please note this policy applies to all University of Washington volunteers and employees, including academic personnel, professional and classified staff, temporary employees, student employees.

This policy applies to all of these groups, regardless of work or volunteer location.

This policy does not apply to employees or volunteers of UW Medicine and other clinics or affiliates.

Employees and volunteers of these facilities should follow their own policies and procedures.

Executive Order 56: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect, includes the following general sections:

A policy statement prohibiting child abuse by anyone in University facilities and programs, and requiring reporting of suspected abuse or neglect by employees and volunteers.

A statement about the applicability of the policy to campus employees and volunteers.

A description of the types of abuse or neglect that align with state definitions.

An explanation of reporting obligations and the steps to take in order to make a report.

A prohibition against retaliation, and protections for reporting in good faith.

One of the most important parts of the policy is the statement that describes the University of Washington’s position on Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.
It reads: "The University of Washington does not tolerate child abuse. Any person who uses University facilities, property, or resources to engage in child abuse, may be subject to arrest and criminal prosecution.

University employees and volunteers who have a reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect must immediately report the suspected abuse, as specified in this policy."

What is reasonable cause?

The Abuse of Children Law has defined reasonable cause as meaning when a person witnesses or receives a credible written or oral disclosure or report alleging abuse or neglect.

'Reasonable cause to believe' does not mean you have to have proof that the abuse occurred, or clear, indisputable facts. It is the job of law enforcement or Child Protective Services to investigate the information that you provide.

Another way to determine what reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect may have occurred or be occurring is to refer to the definitions of abuse and neglect.

The following types of abuse and neglect are defined in Washington State Law and Executive Order 56:

Abuse, which includes physical abuse and sexual abuse,

Negligent treatment,

Sexual Exploitation,

And Abandonment.

Physical Abuse is defined as physical harm done to a child that results in injury or harm.

One important exception to this definition is that parents or guardians are allowed by law to use physical discipline that is considered reasonable and moderate and is for the purposes of correcting the child.

Reasonable and moderate physical discipline should not result in injuries or lasting marks on the child’s body.

Examples of physical abuse may include:

Throwing, burning, kicking or cutting a child,

Striking a child with a closed fist,
Shaking a young child under the age of three,
Choking or otherwise interfering with a child’s breathing,
Or, threatening a child with a weapon.

What are possible indicators that physical abuse has occurred?
Children who are being physically abused may show unique signs, like:
having unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes,
some injuries may be in places on their body that would not result from
every day play or sports,
having fading bruises or other marks after a noticeable absence from
school or activities,
the child protests or cries when it is time to go home.
expressing fear of being seriously harmed, or mentioning that they were
threatened with a weapon.

Sexual Abuse involves touching the sexual or intimate parts of a child’s
body, also allowing or causing a child to engage in touching the sexual
or intimate parts of another person’s body for sexual gratification.

Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:
Rape, which is oral, digital, anal or vaginal penetration,
Molestation, which is touching a child’s sexual or intimate body parts
outside their clothing,
And, sexual misconduct, which can involve coercing a child to touch
another person’s sexual or intimate body parts.

Sometimes there are age differences, or types of relationship that
dictate whether a sexual interaction is illegal.

The age of consent in Washington State is 16 years old. However, people
who are in supervisory positions over youth may be committing a crime of
sexual assault if they are having sexual relations with a minor; even if
the minor has reached the age of consent.

Please refer to the resource section at the end of this program on where
to get more information on this topic.

What are some possible indicators that sexual abuse may be occurring?
A younger child may have knowledge of sexual acts that are outside the realm of what most youth their age would be aware of,

Sexualized behavior, or sexual acting out,

Chronic genital irritation or sexually transmitted infections,

And many other behavioral indicators such as depression, anxiety, poor self-care, and self-harm may also be associated with sexual abuse but can also be attributed to other root causes as well.

Sexual exploitation involves allowing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution, sexually explicit or pornographic activity, either live, recorded or otherwise transmitted.

Neglect, or negligent treatment results from a failure of a parent or guardian to adequately provide care, protection, or to meet the basic needs of a child. Basic needs include food, shelter, clothing, health care, supervision and protection from harm.

Examples of neglect may include

Exposing children to harmful or unsafe environments,

Exposure or access to illicit drugs or dangerous weapons,

Failure to address a child’s physical or emotional health needs, such that their health deteriorates posing a risk for life threatening symptoms or death.

What are some of the possible indicators that neglect may be occurring?

Children who are being neglected show unique signs such as

Frequent absences,

Begging or stealing food or money,

Being consistently dirty or lacking sufficient clothing for the weather,

Deteriorating health despite requests for a parent to address a medical issue.

It is important to note that situations of homelessness or domestic violence do not automatically constitute neglect. Parents may take steps to ensure their children are safe, fed, clothed, and cared for despite challenging circumstances.
Remember you are looking for indicators of harm to a child as a result of any of these circumstances.

Abandonment may have occurred when a parent or guardian forgoes their responsibility to provide essential care by:

Deserting the child in any manner with the intent to abandon the child;

Leaving a child without the means or ability to obtain one or more basic needs including food, water, shelter, clothing, hygiene, and medically necessary healthcare.

Foregoing for an extended period of time their parental rights, functions, duties, and obligations, despite their ability to fulfill these responsibilities; or

Demonstrating a substantial lack of regard for their parental functions or duties for an extended period of time.

What are some possible indicators that abandonment may have occurred?

A child indicates that their parent is absent for long periods of time, leaving them without adequate food, shelter, supervision or other basic resources needed to survive.

A parent has left a child to completely take care of their own needs before they are capable of doing so safely.

It is important to note that this awareness training is just that – a basic explanation of policy, definitions of abuse and neglect, and steps to take to make a report.

We cannot provide a comprehensive list of the behaviors or conditions which may be considered abuse or neglect.

Each employee or volunteer must use their best judgment when reporting.

Now we will present the basic steps that all University of Washington employees and volunteers should follow in reporting an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Step 1: all University employees and volunteers who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect must report the suspected abuse or neglect to the police or the Department of Social and Health Services.

This applies to University volunteers when they are acting with the scope and course of duties as directed by the University.
This applies to employees at all times and locations, regardless of whether the employee is acting in the capacity of their University duties.

The first option is to contact the police.

Contact the local law enforcement in which the abuse occurred. For example, if the abuse occurred in the City of Seattle, contact Seattle Police. If the abuse occurred on UW property, contact the police that supports your campus or property.

At UW Seattle, that is UWPD. In Bothell or Tacoma, local police support those campuses.

In any event where an urgent response is needed, call 911.

The second option is reporting to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Child Abuse Hotline at can be reached at 1-866-END-HARM.

That’s 1-866-363-4276.

This is a TTY accessible line.

Which agency is best to make a report to? Calling either of the above mentioned options meets your reporting requirements as they will refer your report to the other agency if necessary.

Step Two: If you believe that abuse may have occurred in a University program or at a University facility, regardless of location, or may have been perpetrated by a University employee or volunteer, you must make a second report to SafeCampus immediately after contacting the police or DSHS.

SafeCampus will initiate a coordinated University response, as warranted, to ensure proper safety, security and administrative measures are taken. You will be asked to provide the same information you provided in your first report, as well as information regarding the program, location or UW representative who may be associated with the abuse.

Now that we have talked about how to report, let’s review what to report.

When you are making a report with the police or DSHS - what information do they need?

The answer is that any information you know may be useful.

When you call, you may be asked things like
The name, contact information and age of the child;

The name and contact information of the child’s parents, stepparents, guardians or other persons having custody of the child.

Disclosures or injuries you have observed that led you to suspect abuse or neglect.

It is also helpful to share any information you may have regarding previous injuries or abuse,

And any other information that may be helpful in establishing the cause and the identity of the alleged perpetrator or perpetrators.

Do not try to do your own investigation of the concern.

Instead, when you make a report, you will be asked to share what you know or have observed. You do not have to have all of the information to make a report.

Finally, you may be asked to provide your name, affiliation and contact information. It is important to share your information in order to document that you have fulfilled your obligation to report.

A common question is can I report anonymously?

DSHS and the Police do not allow anonymous child abuse reports. They are unable to take action on a report that is anonymous.

Remember, a report merely raises a question about the condition or state of a particular child. Reasonable suspicion, based on objective evidence is all that is needed to report. That evidence may be direct observation or statements made by a parent or child.

According to DSHS, you can request confidentiality and in most cases, the reporter’s name remains confidential. It is also important to know that there are limits to this confidentiality.

When you contact DSHS or the police, they will evaluate whether what you have told them could potentially be child abuse or neglect.

If the answer is yes, then they will initiate an investigation.

If no, then they will make a record of the report in case future reports are received about the same situation.

As the reporter, you may ask DSHS or the police whether they are going to take action on the information you provided.
They typically will let you know if they will be proceeding to an investigation, but only if you request this information.

An important thing to remember is that each new incident, disclosure, or piece of information that causes concern for abuse or neglect must be reported, even if you have to contact DSHS or the police multiple times. Sometimes multiple reports trigger an investigation when a single report may not.

In this final section we will share information on resources available to support you in making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. This is an important role and we want to support you in the process when the need arises to fulfill your duties.

There are provisions in place to protect and support employees and volunteers who make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

University policy, Executive Order 56, prohibits retaliation, which means any adverse action taken against an individual, for making a report in good faith.

These provisions are in place to encourage you to make a report without having to fear retaliation.

Additional resources are available to answer your questions about child abuse or neglect, and to help you fulfill your role as a required reporter of child abuse or neglect.

The Office for Youth Programs Development and Support is available to discuss your questions regarding making reports. You can contact this office by calling 206-616-5153 or via email at uwminors@uw.edu.

Additionally the Youth at UW website has many links you may want to access including:

A link to Executive Order 56: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect,

A robust set of frequently asked questions on topics related to making reports as a University employee or volunteer,

And links to additional resources provided by experts including DSHS, the Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress, and other community partners.

In closing, keep the following in mind:

The University of Washington seeks to provide a safe and welcoming environment to all students, faculty, employees and visitors. This
includes the minors who come to our campus and participate in our programs and events.

We need everyone’s help to create a safe community.

It’s not just every UW employee and volunteer’s responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect, it’s the right thing to do.

This concludes our training on the Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.

For additional information, visit the Youth at UW website at www.uw.edu forward slash youth.