

▶ You Could Save a Child's Life

That's quite a responsibility, but as a school professional you have a duty to report suspected child abuse to the authorities. The nature of your jobs many times puts you in a better position to observe students than some teachers.

You also have a right to be protected from liability as long as your report was made in good faith. Know your district's policy on reporting abuse and what protections you have. Talk to your association rep about any protections in your contract.

It's important to read clues and signs of child abuse carefully. One sign or symptom doesn't necessarily mean a child is being abused.

Here are some clues that may lead you to suspect abuse. A child:

- seems nervous or hyperactive
- has a pattern of unexplained injuries or a large number of "explained" ones
- wears clothes that aren't right for the season
- is regularly late or absent from school
- arrives early or leaves late because he/she doesn't want to go home
- is unusually shy or withdrawn
- goes to the bathroom with difficulty
- is constantly tired or thin
- is unusually afraid of adults or other children

You can also save a child from killing himself/herself or others if you can recognize these warning signals:

- People who have tried suicide before are at a greater risk for succeeding.
- Be alert to someone who talks about death, killing or suicide.
- Someone who is thinking about suicide starts to put his/her life in order by giving away things that are of value.
- A child who withdraws from a regular schedule of activities that he/she once enjoyed could be in trouble.
- Children who seem to be loners or excluded from the group could be in danger.