

Data Collected Regarding Investigation Knowingly False Reporting of Child Abuse Focus Group Project

A series of questions was asked of focus group participants across the Commonwealth. Following are a list of responses that were given in more than one group. Seven focus groups were held. The number of groups which gave similar responses is noted after each entry.

IF YOU DID NOT SUSPECT THAT A REPORT WAS A KNOWINGLY FALSE REPORT AT INTAKE, WHAT CAUSES YOU TO SUSPECT THAT IT IS A KNOWINGLY FALSE REPORT DURING THE INVESTIGATION?

- Referral information is unsubstantiated/inaccurate (child does not have injury that was reported, home was immaculate on unannounced home visit). (7)
- Contacting collaterals yields different information. (5)
- Child recants. (5)
- Investigator's screening is different than intake. (4)
- Child seems coached. (4)
- History of knowingly false reports by referral source or on family. (4)
- Reporting source calls back and takes back referral. (3)
- New or additional information obtained sheds a new light. (3)
- Worker learns of significant event between referral source and parent. (3)
- Agenda/ulterior motives of referral source become evident. (3)
- Custody or support issues become evident. (3)
- Child has ulterior motives (wants to move in with paramour). (2)
- Developmental discrepancies in child (referral source disclosed lots of detail but child is developmentally delayed and does not have cognitive ability). (2)
- Alleged perpetrator has had no contact with child/provides credible alibi. (2)
- Re-interview of referral source. (2)

WHAT DO YOU DO DIFFERENTLY DURING THE INVESTIGATION ONCE YOU SUSPECT THAT IT IS A KNOWINGLY FALSE REPORT AND ONE OF THE INDICATORS IS PRESENT?

- Dig deeper into investigation to learn the reason behind the report (recent court hearings, neighbor disputes), document knowingly false report and close. (5)
- Apologize to family and console, empathize. (4)
- Provide support for family and alleged perpetrator (refer to attorney to initiate legal action, supportive services). (4)
- Make only one home visit, minimal intrusion/interview alleged perpetrator and collaterals over phone. (3)
- Recontact referral source. (3)

Data Collected Regarding Investigation (continued) Knowingly False Reporting of Child Abuse Focus Group Project

- Speed process of investigation. (3)
- Confront referral source. (3)
- Use police to discuss harassment charges. (2)
- Shift investigation to discredit caller, to prove allegations are false/more aggressive interview with child/referral source. (2)
- Discuss consequences /impact of knowingly false report with referral source. (2)

WHAT SERVICES/STRATEGIES HAVE YOU USED EFFECTIVELY WHILE INVESTIGATING CASES OF KNOWINGLY FALSE REPORTS? CONSIDER THE FAMILY, VICTIM AND REPORTER.

- Mediation between referral source and family (formal and informal). (4)
- Refer family to supportive services (parenting/mentoring programs). (4)
- Discuss with reporter the aspects of false reporting. (3)
- Notify doctors, police and attorney. (3)
- Educate family and reporter as to the investigative process. (3)
- Shift focus of investigation by filing emotional abuse on referral source. (3)
- Effective communication with all parties, including treatment parties. (2)
- Empathize with family to lessen impact on family, identify your role, be up front and apologetic. (2)
- Inform family of rights, give parent results of investigation (mail out with letters of instructions on how to make a complaint). (2)
- Contact the custody judge. (2)
- Encourage clients to be careful who their friends are (if you are doing things that annoy people you may find they retaliate, be wary of what you are sharing with people). (2)
- Telling referral source that for the things you are investigating you also have to look at referral source as possible perpetrator (family, parents). (2)
- Be non-evasive with victim and keep child well-informed of the process and what is going on. (2)
- Assuring family that although there is no basis, the county agency must investigate and what the county agency role is. (2)
- Do thorough investigation and risk assessment. (2)
- Minimize intrusion on family so referral source goal of harassment is not met. (2)
- Review child's record (or any knowingly false report referral source) to establish degree of credibility, patterns of truth or falsehood. (2)
- Advise law enforcement officials/district attorney/state police of possible knowingly false report. (2)