

If you see child abuse, report it; it's the law

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For many children, the next few months will be fun-filled, hot summer days with happy childhood memories being created. Sadly, though, my thoughts turn to children facing a different reality.

When children are in school, there are extra eyes and ears keeping up with their lives as their teachers see them every day. A teacher is often the one who notices changes and is a trusted person a child can open up to when he is not safe at home.

According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) 2013 Data Book, In 2013, 40,700 reports of abuse were made to Child Protective Services (CPS) by teachers, the highest percentage of reports at 17.7 percent.

But when school is out for the summer, teachers no longer see the children daily. Our Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers will not let the summer go by without checking to make sure the children are safe and have someone they can confide in.

Texas law states that anyone who thinks a child is being abused, neglected or exploited must make a report to DFPS. A person who reports abuse in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability. DFPS keeps the name of the person making the report confidential. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony.

During the summer months, it is especially important for concerned community members to report suspected child abuse to DFPS at www.txabusehotline.org or by calling (800) 252-5400. Teachers are a great resource for children, but they must not be the only resource.

Keep the children on your mind and in your hearts as you enjoy this summertime, and remember that the children in our community are also the future of our community.

Norma Castilla-Blackwell

Executive director

CASA of Central Texas

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