

Reflecting on Abuse and Neglect

This is a fictionalized account of actual events that occurred on a U.S. military installation. The names, exact dates, locations, and service-specific terminology have been changed or neutralized. To create the activities in this and subsequent lessons, we started with the facts of a real criminal investigation and lawsuit. What you will read here goes beyond the facts recorded in the criminal case by imagining details of individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Although much of what you will read here is fiction, the sequence of events and the tragic consequences are very real.

Learn more about the scenario that you read in Lesson 1. This time, look for the signs of abuse and neglect that you might notice in your program. Please note again, the details and sequence of these scenarios are fictionalized and expanded to demonstrate what you might see or hear in a program. For a more complete and accurate view of Bethany and Braden's Story, you may review the Explore exercises in the lessons for direct care staff. When you have finished reading Bethany and Braden's Story, answer the reflection questions.

Bethany and Braden's Story: Part 2

In the School-Age Program:

Max, a school-age staff member, ran his fingers through his hair and made eye contact with you as you walked through the program. You had several conversations with Max about Braden's behavior, but the behavior still seemed to get worse every day. Braden seemed to completely disconnect from the people around him. He would get very angry and begin destroying things. Max sighs and tells you, "I just caught Braden trying to pull the wings off of a dying fly. What is going on with that kid?" Bethany was just as bad. She seemed to have a vendetta against every adult in the building. If anyone tried to give her a direction, she snapped back with comments like, "Shut up" or "Go away." Sasha was the only staff member Bethany seemed to like, and today was her day off. Max looked exhausted, and the other staff members seemed to be on edge. After the last child left for the day, Max came to you visibly upset. He told you that he saw Caleb, the siblings' older foster-brother, twisting Braden's arm behind his back. At first, he just thought it was roughhousing but something didn't seem right. Braden actually looked scared. He got closer and heard Caleb say, "If you lie again, dad is going to burn your mouth so bad you won't talk for a week."

Several weeks later, Sasha called you from the program. She told you Bethany made a confession about the "obedience tests" to her (the school-age staff member). The obedience tests had become more and more sexual. Bethany was scared of Jonah and told Sasha she did not want to go home.

In the Community:

Neighbors always said the Millers were a great family. They were active in the community and attended all of the neighborhood events with their five children. They had a reputation for being strict, though. A school friend of Caleb's refused to go play at the Miller house. After Mrs. Miller offered a play date, you heard the boy tell his parents that he was scared of Mr. Miller and didn't want to get yelled at. He mentioned the rubber tubing that was placed in different places around the house. He told his parents that the children got hit with the tubing for not cleaning up fast enough. It happened one time while he was there. His parents asked a few more questions and made sure he wasn't hit. Then they explained that some people use spankings to discipline their children. From that point on, they always made sure their son invited Caleb over to their house to

play. They always looked for any signs that the children were mistreated, but they never felt that anyone was in danger.

As the months passed after Bethany and Braden's arrival, neighbors began to hear more shouting from the house. Sometimes it was Bethany screaming curses at the adults. Sometimes it was Mr. Miller raising his voice to the children. They all wanted to respect the Miller's privacy. You overheard neighbors and other families in the school-age program say things like, "It's got to be so hard to bring kids that age into the house" and "They're stronger than I am."

Reflection Questions:

What signs of abuse or neglect did staff members and neighbors notice?

Think about your role in your own program. What signs do you think you will be most likely to see in your role? Does the description of what the T&C at the program witnessed ring true?

Think about the Miller's situation. What was going on in the family's life that might have caused stress? What should have triggered some supports for the family?

Think about the five protective factors. What supports might have helped the family around each of these factors? *Direct care staff members complete this same exercise in their lessons. It is important for you to think in more detail about how you can help create the supports the family might need. Provide more depth than is provided in the expert responses about what you could do at your community, on your installation, or in your program.*

Parental Resilience: This family was dealing with a great deal of stress. What community or installation resources might have helped?	
Social Connections: As military service members stationed away from extended family and friends, what could have helped them build social connections?	
Concrete Support in Times of Need: What concrete supports did they need?	
Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: How could the family have been prepared?	
Social and Emotional Competence of Children: Bethany and Braden’s behavior was some indication that they needed support around social and emotional competence. What might have helped them?	