

APPENDIX 6 - Sample Demonstration Guide for Responding to Disclosure of Abuse from a Child¹

Demonstration Guide for Responding to Disclosure of Abuse from a Child

The situation

Wang is a teacher. She notices that her student Zhu Ye has been quiet and withdrawn and not doing well at her studies. She knows that Zhu Ye's mother has AIDS and that Zhu Ye is caring for her. Wang wants to have a talk with Zhu Ye and she knows that this conversation needs to be handled very sensitively and carefully. She needs to make sure that Zhu Ye trusts her enough to open up to her. When Wang invites Zhu Ye to have a private conversation, Zhu Ye begins to tell her that her father has been beating her mother for several years. Recently, her father has begun to beat her and her brother as well....

The appropriate response

Wang will need to try to:

- Find a safe place to talk that feels private.
- Make the time for the Zhu Ye that is not rushed or pressured.
- Ask Zhu Ye in a gentle way about what is happening in her life. Wang might say *"I have noticed that you look sad. Is there anything that you would like to talk with me about?"*
- Listen carefully and let Zhu Ye know that Wang is interested in her situation.
- If Zhu Ye does not want to talk, it is important not to pressure her. Wang might say *"I see that this is difficult for you to talk about today. You can come to me any time when you feel comfortable to talk about it."*
- Observe Zhu Ye carefully to see if her situation continues or gets worse.
- Make Zhu Ye feel that Wang believes her and does not judge or blame her for the problem.
- Make Zhu Ye know that it is not her fault that the violence is

¹ Adapted from Save the Children's "Protect the Children: A Guide to Support those Working and Living with Children Affected by Violence." c/o Right To Play, China.

happening.

- Listen without interrupting. If something Zhu Ye says is not clear, Wang could say, in a gentle and understanding way: *"Zhu Ye, please could you explain this a little more to me so that I understand clearly what has happened to you."*
- Praise Zhu Ye for her courage to speak to Wang about hurtful things.
- Ask her if she has spoken to anyone else about the violence – such as her mother, her brother, her sister or another trusted adult.
- If Zhu Ye begins to cry, Wang should try to comfort her – for instance by putting her arm around her, drying her tears, reassuring her that it is all right to talk about hurtful things.

Zhu Ye will need Wang to:

- Understand if Zhu Ye feels angry at Wang, if Zhu Ye hits out or swears or uses angry language. Wang could handle this by saying *"I understand that you are angry, but please do not take your anger out on me. I am here to help you."*
- Only tell the designated Child Protection Support person. It is important that Zhu Ye's information remains confidential and isn't shared with friends, colleagues and family members of Wang. Wang may say *"Your safety is the most important thing to me. I promise not to tell anyone who doesn't need to know. I will have to inform one person whose job it is to help keep children safe. I will let you know if anyone else needs to know about it."*
- Be honest and direct.

After the talk, these are the important things for Wang to do:

- Not leave Zhu Ye crying or in a bad emotional state. Children sometimes harm themselves after talking about this great secret for the first time, especially if they feel they cannot be helped.
- Tell the truth to Zhu Ye – not to promise things that cannot be done.
- Leave the child feeling hopeful.
- Help the child feel that there are some good things in her life as well.
- Try to tell Zhu Ye clearly what Wang plans to do to help her situation.
- Assure Zhu Ye that Wang will stand by her during the coming time.
- Plan for another time to talk so that Zhu Ye knows Wang is there for her.