Foundations of Mandatory Reporting for Refugee Service Providers

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Maya Wahrman (MW): Hi, everyone. Welcome to our webinar on Mandatory Reporting. So glad that you could join us. We have a lot of folks here, and more are coming. Welcome. I'm really glad to be back with you for this webinar again, which I have run for Switchboard before. My name is Maya Wahrman. I'm a training officer here. My bio is available in the announcement. I just wanted to mention, besides being a licensed Social Worker in New Jersey, with nearly a decade of experience in social work with immigrants and refugees, I have done a lot of direct service with refugees and immigrants, and have had to make several mandatory reports and follow up with Child Protective Services and with clients to make sure that they're cared for.

I'm really excited to be here today, even though this can be difficult stuff, but it's really important. Also, when I was in my studies for my Master of Social Work, I had several Child Protective Services longtime employees in my cohort, and I learned a lot from them about how protective services and folks like us are doing a lot of the same work to try to support clients and the safety and best interests of our community. Thank you for being here. It's really supportive and impactful to the people and the families we're working with. Whether it's a refresher or the content's brand new, we are really glad to have you.

I also helped write here at Switchboard, our accompanying guide, which my colleague Claire has just pasted in the chat. Which she also supported with and that may be helpful as a reference. I'm also grateful to Claire and Rebecca for helping run this behind the scenes and answering your Q&A. Before we begin with our learning objectives, I want to acknowledge we're navigating some deeply complex times, from funding challenges to the broader uncertainties around resettlement in the United States. These are layered issues. They impact us in many different ways, and we're all trying to make sense of what it means for our communities and futures.

That's why spaces like this matter. Your presence here today shows a commitment to understanding solidarity and finding a way forward together. Switchboard wants to thank you for showing up. Let's dive in now to our learning objectives with the clarity and compassion this moment demands. By the end of this session, you will be able to describe key principles of mandatory reporting and reportable situations, such as abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults, identify who may be a mandatory reporter and possible steps of the reporting process, integrate special considerations for working across cultures with newcomers in the mandatory reporting context, and apply client-centered and trauma-informed principles to maintain client confidentiality and trust while upholding mandatory reporting responsibilities.

1. Abuse, Neglect, and Mandatory Reporting

MW: It's a lot to do, so we're going to dive right in here with our first section, defining the basic terms and principles of abuse, neglect, and mandatory reporting. Before we start with our definitions, it's really important to put this qualifier here, that abuse

and neglect do not discriminate. All clients are susceptible. Violence exists in all communities and social sectors. Abuse can be inflicted by anyone, not just a person responsible for a child or vulnerable adult's care, custody, and control. All clients, regardless of age, racial or ethnic background, gender, religion, any of these things can be susceptible to violence and abuse.

We have a few case scenarios. You'll see that they represent different communities, but they were not singled out, as these are communities in which abuse and neglect solely exist because it really, unfortunately, exists everywhere. We're going to define mandated reporters here with this quote. “Mandated reporters have an individual duty to report known or suspected abuse or neglect relating to children, elders, or dependent adults”. That comes from the National Association of Mandated Reporters.

The term mandated reporter is most often associated with people who have a responsibility to report suspected child abuse, but it can also refer to someone who reports abuse of adults, elderly people, dependent adults, and adults with disabilities. Most of our case scenarios do focus on children here, but not solely. We hope you'll take this on as it does not only apply to children. With that, about who might you be reporting, that really depends on your state laws. Here at Switchboard, we serve all 50 states and anyone doing resettlement in the US, so we won't be able to get into those local particularities.

MW: We'll talk a little bit about where you can find that information for your state. A lot of the general guidelines are the same. We're talking about children under 18, vulnerable adults of any age, such as those with any emotional or physical impairment, to self-protection and self-determination. Elderly adults, that's generally 65+, and it's any child or vulnerable adult, not just clients. That's pretty crucial here. Note that any person can report at any time, even if you're not a state-mandated reporter. We'll talk a little bit more about what it means to be a mandated reporter.

Anyone who is here can make a report if they think that it's necessary. Why report? We have a duty to do no harm. We have an imperative to serve and protect the most vulnerable. Harmful impacts of abuse, neglect, and abandonment on clients and communities they're really hard. We don't want to be a part of that. We want to be a part of making our clients and communities safer. Not reporting, if we know of something that needs to be reported, leaves vulnerable people even more vulnerable to trauma, abuse, and harm, which really impacts our communities negatively. It's really important to do this work. Thank you for being here to learn how to do it.

What are we reporting about? I'm going to define abuse, any physical, sexual, or emotional injury inflicted on another person, other than by accidental means. That accident piece is key. Unfortunately, kids and vulnerable adults do get hurt and fall and things. The piece of if it's been inflicted, not through accidental means. In some states, witnessing interpersonal violence can be construed as abuse, such as if a child witnesses domestic violence between their parents. Even in states where that's not considered child abuse or necessarily reportable, that can definitely have a negative impact on the child. That can be a difficult area to navigate.

MW: We're going to define a bit more of what kinds of abuse there are and how we might recognize them, but this is our overarching definition today. Neglect is also

important to define. It's when a caregiver consistently fails to meet the basic needs of a child or vulnerable adult, such as adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or supervision. We're going to get into later what's the difference between neglect and poverty. I know that with both abuse and neglect, we have to rely a lot on our judgment and our good faith acting, that is it abuse or neglect, or is there something else going on?

We're going to talk about those indicators and try to equip you with the information to make those decisions real-time. We recognize that it can be a pretty high-stake decision. Before we talk about those indicators, I want to define disclosure. This is when a client tells you directly about abuse or neglect. It can be on purpose or accidental. It can be about themselves or another person. You might witness abuse or neglect directly with these other indicators. We're not necessarily just waiting for a disclosure. We're going to talk about what happens if we witness or suspect abuse or neglect.

MW: Our job is not to ever force disclosure or make sure that someone tells us before we make a report. It does happen, maybe on purpose, maybe they didn't mean to, but someone tells us about abuse or neglect happening to themselves or someone else. We want to respond kindly and professionally, to show that we know how to handle the information and support them as they navigate this process. We'll talk more about that. Let's talk first about potential indicators of abuse. How do we know if we're facing abuse or neglect? What are some of the things to look out for?

Physical abuse. Sometimes this is more prevalent in our minds when we hear the word abuse. This can mean there's unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes. Fading bruises or marks that are noticeable after an absence from school or from services. Frequently wearing clothing that's not seasonal to cover one's body. Someone who's always wearing hoodies in the summer, are they trying to hide some marks of physical abuse? Someone who's withdrawn or aggressive, extreme behaviors, can be an indicator of physical abuse.

If children are frightened of parents or they protest and cry when it's time to go home. If children shrink at the approach of adults, if they're very scared of adults, or if they have bizarre explanations of injuries. Physical abuse, again, it's that non-accidental physical injury. It can range from minor bruises to severe fractures or life-threatening situations. As a result of any number of physical abuses, punching, beating, kicking, choking, et cetera, burning. These are generally inflicted on a child by a parent or caregiver, but it could be by anyone who has responsibility for the child.

These injuries are considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. If it was non-accidental, it's still considered physical abuse. Next, we'll talk about sexual abuse. Some indicators of sexual abuse can be difficulty walking or sitting, there's pain or swelling in the genital area, nightmares or bedwetting, sudden change in appetite. I'll say with bedwetting, that's also if it's not age-appropriate at that point. Also, sexual knowledge or behavior that's not age-appropriate, sudden extreme behavior changes, or very secretive behavior from youth, pregnant or contracting venereal disease, particularly if under age 14, frequent urinary or yeast infections, and drug or alcohol abuse or attempted suicide, especially with older youth. Those are some of the things to look out for.

MW: Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that denigrates a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. This could be constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Unfortunately, it's often difficult to prove, and consequently, child's protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or trauma to the child. Some things to maybe look out for, again, those extremes in behavior. If a child is really inappropriately adult, fully parenting other children, or inappropriately infantile, frequent rocking or head-banging, that's not age-appropriate.

If they're delayed in physical or emotional development, if they have psychosomatic symptoms, they're always unexplainably sick or feeling really bad, if they report a lack of attachment to their parent or caregiver, if they've attempted suicide, more often as an adolescent. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms of abuse are identified. It can be hard to isolate, to report in itself. Most cases, if there's another kind of abuse, there's been some emotional abuse. Physical and sexual abuse and neglect do have an emotional and psychological impact on a person.

Going back to neglect, which we defined earlier, this can mean abandonment. Indicators mean stealing or hoarding food. Someone who's frequently absent from school has difficulty staying awake in school, consistently inappropriately dressed for the weather, especially if you've reached out and tried to support with getting seasonally appropriate clothes. Exhibits poor hygiene, has severe body odor that's unaddressed, lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses, reports there's no one at home to provide care, and if other children in the family show similar behaviors.

MW: There's lots of different kinds of neglect. You can see educational neglect, medical neglect, but these are some of those key indicators. In today's world, we have the possibility of online abuse or technology-facilitated abuse. Like child sexual abuse that is offline, online child exploitation is most likely perpetrated by someone the child knows and cares about. Online abuse does not only have to be sexual. Some of these indicators can include unexplained gifts or money, sudden game subscriptions. If a child is presenting themselves as older online, if they send revealing photos or videos of themselves and you learn about that, or if the child becomes very secretive and they minimize screens or hide devices when you walk into a room, and you notice some suspicion there.

Finally, we're going to touch very briefly on human trafficking. This is not a focus of today's presentation. We have a lot of other resources at Switchboard, which I would really encourage you to look into. There are two types of human trafficking, labor trafficking and sex trafficking. Trafficking can be both of those things. That's the coercion of folks to engage in commercial sexual acts or other labor acts. Traffickers recruit, entice, transport, provide, obtain people for forced labor, or patronize or solicit sex from a person non-consensually.

A child under 18 in the US cannot give consent for commercial sex acts. Any minor, it is automatically sex trafficking. These are folks who are often experiencing abuse or neglect. When reporting on this, you're going to want to specify that you suspect commercial child sexual exploitation or labor trafficking of children. There are other hotlines available, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline. I encourage you to look more into our resources at Switchboard and other national resources on trafficking.

These are some of our indicators of abuse. If we're getting a sense of, is there abuse or neglect in this situation, what should I do?

2. General Mandatory Reporting Guidelines

MW: We're going to get into our second learning objective here of our general mandatory reporting guidelines, trying to go over roles, laws, and process. It does vary state by state, as I mentioned. This is a general overview, and we'll explain where you can find more information. I'm sure you're here. I'm sure you're here and you either know or you're asking, who is a mandated reporter? If you're here because you're working with refugees and newcomers, in most states, refugee resettlement direct service workers are mandated reporters.

I think, if you're here, you're likely to be a mandated reporter. In some states, mandated reporters also include staff or volunteers who provide any organized activities for children. We got quite a few questions in preparation for this training about if volunteers are mandated reporters, and if they're working in an organized way with children, they could be. Other people who might be mandated reporters, social workers, doctors and nurses, healthcare workers, other mental health professionals, teachers and school personnel, camp counselors, foster parents, and coaches. That's a wide range of folks.

We encourage you if in your state, volunteers or others who are interacting with your clients are considered mandatory reporters, to give them these kinds of resources, like this training or the guide that we shared, to help train them and prepare them if they are reporters. If you're a mandated reporter and you learn about abuse and neglect, you have to make that report yourself, but you can receive the support of a supervisor or a licensed social worker, or someone who might feel a little better equipped. If you're here, you already know that you might be a mandated reporter. You might be supporting people who are mandated reporters.

MW: What is a mandated reporter's role? What are our roles as service providers? Besides being a reporter, we're the support person, and we connect folks to resources. We provide non-judgmental care and support to the person who is the subject of a report. What we're not is we're not investigators. It's really important to say that now. We want to be aware and observe. We're not always waiting for someone to say, I'm subject to abuse or neglect, if we suspect, given those indicators. We'll talk more later about how we provide support and connection to resources in these situations.

I really want to emphasize here, our job is not to investigate, to find out what and when, and how long, just to make the report with the information we have, so that someone who is better equipped to investigate can do so, and we can continue to support the vulnerable clients in the meantime.

MW: We're going to have our first case scenario here. I want you to meet Santiago and Karla. Santiago is seven, and Karla is five. They're siblings in a Guatemalan family that resettled three months ago. The family has completed their initial service period, including their cultural orientation. You are running an after-school program at

your agency, and you have enrolled Santiago and Karla. When they come to their first session, you notice each of them has a few visible bruises on their arms and legs. When you ask about the bruises, they shrug and say it was nothing, but they look uncomfortable and avoid your gaze. This is our first time we're going to be engaging in Slido. You can scan that QR code or go to slido.com and put in the code 2643988. That information will come up anonymously as you type it. Press Enter. I'd love to hear from you.

We have a lot of people in the room. What would your next step be in this case? How might you support or think about supporting Santiago and Karla? "Check in with a supervisor." Good. Always good to check in with supportive supervision. Great. I'm glad people seem to have supportive supervisors, so they know where to talk. "Talk to their parents." "Monitor the kids and any indicators each time you see them." "Make a report." "Document noticing the bruising." "Ask more questions." "Document what you notice." "Monitor closely." "Ask if they feel safe."

MW: These are all great. "Talk to their teachers." Check again with supervisors. "Track indicators." "Make a note." "Try to get more information and file a report." "Inquire more info from the kids' parents." I'm going to talk about that in a moment. "Take good notes." "Documentation." "Ask other staff to keep an eye and report if they see anything else." I'm seeing a lot of really great responses. "You can always call to consult with Child Protective Services to see if the case should be reported." That's a great idea. "Talk to their guardian." "Document each day." "Don't press them but assure them you're there to support them and consult with supervisors." "Monitor and ask if the children are safe at home."

These are really great. I want to reiterate a few of these points. Documenting what you saw, what's of concern, so that you have a record. I think this is a reportable situation. We're going to talk in a moment about what it means to make a report, but continuing to monitor it if it's getting worse, if they do end up telling you something. Talking to parents. I think if there are some unexplained bruises that you might want to kindly ask about, and you think it's safe to do so, that's a great idea. I don't know what your relationship is with these parents.

It may not feel like it's the safest option for either you or the kids. That's going to be dependent on the context and your working relationship with everyone. I love that people were saying, talking to the supervisor, monitoring, maybe calling Child Protective Services to ask, "Hey, is this something that I should report with the information that I have. Checking in with the kids, "How are you feeling? Is there anything you want to tell me?" I want to support and make sure that they know what your role is. These are really great examples, and I really appreciate all of your participation here.

MW: Let's keep in mind, Santiago and Karla, or if there's a case you're working with who you have made a report or need to potentially make a report, you can keep them in mind. We're going to think about the general process. We've decided to report. What can we expect? First, we're going to determine if we have reasonable suspicion to make that report. I'll talk about reasonable suspicion in a moment. We'll make the report with our local state abuse neglect agency. Then we'll follow up with the authorities, and we'll support the clients when we're able.

A lot of our presentation today is really about that piece. First, determining if we have reasonable suspicion to make a report. Again, thinking about those indicators of abuse or neglect. When are you legally required to report? The language is if you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect. Reasonable suspicion based on all the facts and circumstances that you know. You don't need to spend time just gathering. If you think you have reasonable cause to suspect, it's time to make that report. If you directly observe a child being subjected to circumstances reasonably resulting in abuse or neglect, or it's been disclosed to you.

If you have that reasonable suspicion, the report must be direct and immediate to the child abuse neglect agency or hotline in your state, municipality. This is not a, "I'll do it tomorrow, I'll do it way at the end of the day." You need to take time to make that report now. If there is an immediate or imminent danger, please call 911 before making that report. It's really important to say you do not need all of the facts in order to make a report. Indicate clearly if you do not know an answer. If you know where they live, but not when they were last home, or what the parent's names are.

MW: If you've determined that you have that reasonable suspicion, you need to make a report immediately and just be honest about what you do or don't know. Some situations in which people say, "Should I still make the report?" If Child Protective Services is already involved with the family, if a mandated reporter receives information about abuse and neglect from a third party, teacher, principal, should they be reporting because it's third-party knowledge? Really, you want to err on the side of reporting. You don't know if Child Protective Services knows this new abuse or information, even if they're already involved with the family.

You want to ensure a report has been made, even if it's third-party information, if that person cannot confirm if a report has been made. If the allegation of suspicion involves a colleague or coworker, it's still really important to make that report. We want to err on the side of making the report. I'll talk in a moment about some of the protections that come with that.

MW: Responding to a disclosure from someone who is telling you about abuse or neglect, we're going to use this acronym 'I CARE.' The I is for Information. Gather information, but do not investigate. Do not make someone repeat the disclosure. You don't want to have them keep telling you, they've told you that may have been a very difficult thing to do. Just gather the information in the kindest way that you can, and then prepare that for a report. C is for Calm. This can be difficult. We're going to take a breath, listen, answer all their questions honestly. A is for Assure. Remind clients that you can handle the information, be proactive, and have a script. We want to stay calm and be honest in that sense of not telling clients promises you can't keep, like, "Oh, I won't tell anyone," or something like that, or I will promise you this will never happen again. More like, "Thank you for sharing. This must have been really difficult. I'm going to support you in all the ways that I can," such as. Claire has dropped a link to a sample script we have in the chat. I really encourage you to look at it and practice it so that you can be ready to respond to disclosure. Then you're going to make that report. That's the R. Contact the appropriate agency or hotline directly and immediately. Finally, encourage, E, support policies and environments that prioritize client safety. We're going to get into that E later in the presentation.

MW: For now, we're going to focus on that R. What are some of the guidelines, and what can you expect when you make a report with your local state abuse and neglect agency? You're probably asking, "Who do I report to? How do I find my state resources?" Some great resources available are the Child Welfare Information Gateway, which is searchable by state, National Adult Protective Services Association, known as NAPSA, which is state-by-state guidance. Searching your state's Department of Human Services mandatory reporting resources. Looking for free training in your state by searching your state's name. New Jersey, plus free mandatory reporter training. I really encourage you, if you supervise or direct an agency, have your specific state and locality's reporting hotlines and resources readily available to all staff and volunteers so that you can gather some of that information before they have to make a report, and feel like they're scrambling.

What are protections for mandatory reporters? If it's legally obligated, you are protected. The safeguards are that employers cannot prevent or discourage reporting, nor retaliate. You can't be retaliated against for saying, I need to make this report. Immunity is provided. Anyone making a report in good faith, meaning that they're not trying to malign someone or just get them in trouble, they're immune from liability. Even if you're not sure, but you think you have reasonable suspicion, and they find out later it was not a case of abuse or neglect, if you were making that report in good faith, that's okay. You're totally protected. You have the protection of confidentiality. Reporter identity and report content remain confidential. Only investigators would know that.

MW: No one can retaliate, take any sanction or penalty against you. An employee has the right to make an immediate unrestricted report to take time from their day to go receive a phone or whatever they need in order to make that report, and they'll be temporarily relieved of other work duties while making the report. A question that came in a few times in preparation for this training is, what are the consequences for not reporting? We talked a lot about the negative impacts it can have in our community and on our clients. It's really important to make a report.

It could be badly liable to you or your agency if abuse and neglect it's found out that you knew and you didn't make a report. Keep in mind, this is a time-sensitive process. It's important to make the report once we have that reasonable suspicion. As I saw in the Slido, consult with your supervisor or consult directly with Child Protective Services if you're in doubt or have questions about how and when to make the report. They can really help you in making that report directly.

You've identified who to call, what to expect. The agency or hotline worker will likely ask the name of the client, so the child or vulnerable adult in question. The name of the parents or the caregivers. The name of the alleged abuser, remembering that the alleged abuser is not necessarily the caregiver or the parents. Where the client can be located. If you have a home address, but also are the children currently at school. Other concerns or helpful information. This is a good moment to say, "Hey, this child is a refugee. They have limited English. They need a Dari interpreter. They recently arrived in this country, and they have a history of war-related trauma." You do not need every detail to make a call. It's more important to make that call swiftly and immediately. Provide the above information to the best of your ability. Again, don't assume if you don't know other things. It's okay to say, I don't know. It's better to say that than to try to fill in the gaps yourself.

That's making the report. Then we're going to talk about following up. What does it mean to follow up with the authorities or support the clients when you're able? As you can imagine, a client does not stop needing support after you've made a report. They probably just need more support than they even did previously.

MW: Your role during and after reporting is to document the report and safeguard sensitive information. Clients can always ask to see their case notes. You want to make sure that if a report has been made, you have the bare minimum of information there, and you've safeguarded the sensitive information, including your own name as the reporter. We have some great documentation resources at Switchboard if you want to think more about that. If you have a release of information in place with the family, you can follow up with the appropriate agency for updates or next steps.

If the family has allowed you to share that information, you can see where the report is at and what might be happening. Regardless, we're going to want to support the client with referrals, ongoing assistance, advocacy, and safety planning if needed. We'll come back to what that looks like.

What happens after you've made the report? The investigating agency will examine the report and screen for urgency and severity. Investigators will likely visit within one to three days based on the information you gave to see how urgent it is, where they need to find folks, what they need to do to make sure they have a thorough investigation. They may continue that investigation or determine there's not a need for further investigation, but they will keep a record of the report, and that will be a permanent record so that if something happens in the future with the same client or family, they can follow up with that.

Please note that the reporter information is never shared with the alleged perpetrator or family members of the children. Again, your information as the reporter is anonymous. The investigator will never say, "Well, this person told us this, and that." That information is confidential. That's really important for our own protection.

3. Special Considerations Working Across Cultures with Newcomers

MW: That's what happens with a report or after. I know that you're here learning with Switchboard because you generally work with refugees and newcomers. We want to think about special considerations working across cultures or with refugees and newcomers here. We're going to go back to the Slido. I know we have a lot of experts in this room who are doing this work all the time. What are some considerations in mandatory reporting with refugee clients from different cultural backgrounds? Again, you can-- oh, we'll go back. You can scan that QR code. It looks like it's working now, or go to slido.com and put in that same code. If you already have it on your phone, it should be up.

I'd love to hear from you. What are some considerations in mandatory reporting with your clients or with folks from different cultural backgrounds? "Deportation issues." Concern about interacting with law enforcement. Thank you for sharing. "Understanding cultural differences." "Don't always assume non-seasonal clothing as hiding injury, especially if it's part of religious practice." "Respectful of culture and beliefs." "Risk of separation." "Different culture around child discipline." "Different cultures around child responsibility or hygiene." "Language barriers." "Using right tools for interpretation."

"Not knowing how to navigate protective services." Absolutely. These are some really important ones. "Body odor may be a sign of neglect in the US, but hygiene is practiced differently." "Different discipline standards." "Law enforcement and changes." "Distrust of the system." Absolutely. We're going to come back to that. "Cultural understanding of what is age of adulthood." I think that's a really important one. "Poverty, trauma, and trust, respecting the family culture." "Religious considerations." "Not understanding things like car seats for babies." Absolutely.

These are super important. "Various cultural practices that don't align with US traditions." "Distrust in medical institutions." Medical neglect. They don't trust the doctors. I think that's a really important one. "Fear of being judged due to stigma if separation is worse." "Girls punished for acts done against them." If folks are worried about being punished for having suffered abuse or neglect. "Safety considerations in a city versus where they've lived previously." "Confirming the primary language they speak to avoid miscommunication." "Use of alternative medicines." It's a great one.

MW: These are really important. I'm going to try to address all of these in this section. I want to say off the bat here that I really understand there's a lot of fear and mistrust about different authorities and government authorities, and we're going to talk some about that here with these risk factors. Child Protective Services is not a law enforcement agency. Really we're trying to find the shared values of caring for children and vulnerable people. A lot of these agencies are staffed by people with clinical training like ourselves or more training. We want to make sure that we know when we're reporting, it's not necessarily to law enforcement, it's to an agency that's also trying to keep the best interests of children and vulnerable adults in mind.

Some of the risk factors we have here, differences in child welfare and other government systems. A fear of the government, that the government is not here at all to protect our best interests, folks who have come from places with abductions and repressive governments, that can be a really jarring difference. Having a lack of resources or being in poverty, which I'll come back to. Newcomers, unfortunately, are often really isolated or have some societal marginalization. They don't always have the same kind of community support that other folks do. A lot of times they do as well, but they can feel really marginalized, overwhelmed, or not know where to turn for help that fits their cultural needs and contacts.

Unfortunately, prior trauma experiences, especially of prior child abuse or neglect, or any abuse or neglect, are major risk factors for perpetuating violence. We know forcefully displaced folks often have higher levels of trauma exposure to violence, and so that can be a difficult cycle of violence to break. That's not saying that everyone who has had exposure to violence will perpetuate violence, but it is a possibility, and it's something we have to keep in mind.

Something a lot of you touched on is that unfamiliarity with US laws, culture, and language. Not knowing what is appropriate here. How do I find help? Who do I turn to for advice? Not understanding what people are saying. I think another important one to mention here is vulnerability to trafficking. If a child is expected to get a job and work hard, they could be vulnerable to exploitation because of their young age, or manipulation, pressure to perform, pressure to support the family. If there are gender roles and expectations about you have to support the family in X way, that could render them vulnerable to trafficking.

MW: Thinking about serving clients from different cultures. There is a famous case in 1997 of a Danish mother who left her child in a stroller outside a restaurant in New York City. She went to dine in the restaurant. Someone called 911. The child welfare authorities were involved. To this mother and in her Danish culture, leaving a child outside of a restaurant to breathe fresh air, no cigarettes, no loud noises, knowing that others on the street would look out for the well-being of the child, that was what was considered acceptable and best for the child. She had no idea that in the US, she was engaging in criminal behavior. She thought she was doing the best thing for her baby. That is what would have been considered the best thing for her baby in her home country. It was a really drawn-out legal case involving child welfare authorities as well.

I want to start with this story in serving clients from different cultures because that's from a Western European culture. It breaks some of the stereotypes that only non-Western or non-white cultures have practices that in the US would be considered child abuse or neglect. We are working with a lot of different cultures that have different ideas of what is best for a child and their development. For example, in Liberian culture, children are raised much more communally. Having neighbors look out for your children and letting them roam in the neighborhood alone is considered acceptable and even healthy for the child.

I know that I love the show on Netflix, *Old Enough*, which is where Japanese parents send their toddlers to cross busy streets and into town alone to perform tasks. That right of passage is really important, and it's protected in certain ways in that Japanese culture in helping the child grow up and learn responsibility. That would not be accepted within US cultural norms.

MW: These are important things to keep in mind. Culture really shapes the way that children or family members are raised and treated. We want to identify and nurture the cultural strengths, beliefs, and practices of the individuals and family, and integrate that knowledge into your plan to help protect. Some of the ways that culture shapes the ways we're raised and treated. Family sleep habits, co-sleeping is one. This came up in my social work class. Someone said, "Absolutely, no co-sleeping." I know loved ones in my community and my family who co-sleep with kids. That was a surprising one to me, that felt like it wasn't completely culturally responsive. Alternative forms of medicine, which someone mentioned in the Slido, which could be part of religious or spiritual healing, corporal discipline, spanking, or other ways of trying to keep children safe. Sometimes, if you lived in a very dangerous area and people were so afraid of making sure their kids knew what the rules were, they used corporal punishment to make sure they knew how to be safe. Now that they're, hopefully, in a slightly safer neighborhood and that US laws are in place to protect from corporal punishment, how can we pivot? Rites of passage that may change or disfigure the body, or drinking substances, or other forms of religious healing.

Again, we want to identify and nurture those cultural strengths, beliefs, and practices. How could you encourage communal raising while emphasizing that in this country, children need to be attended to? How can you say it's great that you trust your neighbors to care for your children and you want to see them grow? They can't be left home alone in this country. What are other ways that the community can support you in raising your children? How could you praise families for giving their children opportunities to learn responsibility and try new things while educating them about

community safety laws in this country? How could you work with the strengths of wanting your child to have fresh air while explaining law and community safety? To that Danish mom, that's really wonderful. What are places that you can take your child and be with them to have that fresh air to be exposed to the world?

MW: These are ways in which you can validate some of these cultural experiences that help shape us and validate that people want the best for their children. If a cultural practice falls within the legal definitions of abuse or neglect, it must be reported. We're going to talk about how you can give this information to your clients and provide this education proactively and not only reactively.

We have a case scenario here. You're taking a recently arrived Afghan family to a local mosque to connect them to their community. As you drop off the family, their eight-year-old boy is not listening to his parents' request to get out of the car. The situation escalates, and you witness the father strike the child's cheek with his hand. The mosque's imam also witnesses the interaction. As the family enters, he takes you aside and asks that you not report the incident, citing cultural norms and explaining that the family is new to this country. Going back to Slido, how might you respond to the imam? Love to hear your thoughts here.

[pause]

MW: Folks, a moment to connect here to the Slido. The imam has asked you not to report what you saw. “Explain transparently that you are a mandatory reporter and you're obligated by law”. “Make the report. Acknowledge the difference in circumstances while also informing of your legal obligations”. “Explain you understand cultural norms, but you are a mandated reporter here”. Will the imam take responsibility if it escalates? Maybe saying, "I need to do this for safety because as a responsible reporter here, I have to make sure that something is followed up." Transparency.

“Report, but let the parents know we're going to talk about disclosure and reporting” “Ask the imam if they could speak with the family about American cultural differences”. “Tapping into different community resources to help provide the education”. “Make a report”. “Provide parenting classes”. Absolutely. These are great. “Explain that it's for the well-being of the child”. “Ask the imam for help educating the family on the issue”. “Explain you're a mandatory reporter and why reporting is important”. “Provide psychoeducation”. “Report it and explain to the family”.

How can you talk about these issues and not use corporal punishment? “Gain more information to see if it's a common practice or repeated in that family”. “Explain it's a teachable moment for the family”. “Ensuring safety and making sure we don't perpetuate the negative impact for ongoing abuse”. Absolutely. I'm seeing a lot of educating the family, understanding, talking to the imam, but being transparent about what our legal responsibilities are. “Let them know I cannot use discretion in this case, but they can explain the situation to family services, explain the requirements under US law”. “Ask if they've been introduced to any community organizations for family services”.

“What other services are available to provide this information? Does the family need counseling or support as they get this help?” That's a great one. “Be understanding and also be transparent, then explain that due to safety reasons, you have to make the report”. I think that's a really important point that it's not adversarial necessarily to make a report. It's saying, "In order to support you and your goals, I need to make this report and work with you to make sure that this information switches." “Refer the Imam to switchboard”. We would love to speak to that imam and support also in a culturally responsive way.

“This is why we have cultural orientation with them, so they understand more of our report”. Absolutely. Again, we want to give that information proactively and say, "In cultural orientation and intake, these are the things that are acceptable. This is when I will need to report. Here are some alternatives. What are some ways that I can work with you to make this a safer, smoother transition for your family?" Thank you so much. These are really wonderful responses. Seeing again cultural orientation. We're going to continue this case scenario.

MW: Taking a lot of your suggestions, you thank the Imam for his perspective. When you return to your office, you make a report and later schedule time to speak to the family to educate them on disciplinary practices that are accepted in the US. The next time you drop the family off, the imam confronts you, upset that the family was reported. The report was anonymous, but the family told him they were contacted by the local child protective services. How would you navigate this situation? We're back again in Slido.

[pause]

“Explain the role of mandatory reporters in the United States”. Again, this is the start of a conversation, not the end of a conversation. How can we support? “Do more cultural orientation”. I think assuring the family that you're still working with them and you still care about their well-being, and we'll continue to do that through the report. “Providing education to the imam that you were required to report”. “Providing parenting classes or cultural orientation”. “Reminding them about your support and resources”. I think saying to the Imam, "It's confidential who made the report, but this is a way that we can all support the well-being of this family."

“Explain the why and what may happen next”. Those are great. “Ask how you can best support the family and that you care about all family members and their safety”. “Emphasize that you have the same goals of the imam to protect all members of the family”. Absolutely. We're trying to do this work collaboratively. We have the same goals of protecting everyone. “Keeping in mind the consequences could be to the children, other family members, and the father is confronted”. We're going to talk a little bit about that and safety planning. “Have a conversation about culture and cultural practices”.

Yes, I'm seeing a lot of, "Have this conversation." I think that's really important. It's not, "You do this, this is what happened in the end, but this is how it's going right now. How can we improve this situation? What can you do to improve this situation?" “Explaining the side effects of child abuse to the family”. “Advocate for all clients regardless if the client is the abuser”. Yes, the father is still your client. How can you support him, as well as making sure that the children are safe?I think also explaining

we actually know that corporal punishment can have a really negative effect on children, and maybe that's not something you knew, and this is why it's important to change these behaviors because you care about your children.

MW: These are all really great responses. Continuing that, but on the next Slido, I want to hear how can you continue to support the family? Let's see if we can go back to that, and if not, we'll continue. Perfect. “Reassuring them it's for their well-being”. “Meeting with parents to elaborate on the state laws regarding witness or suspected abuse”. These are all great.

I guess these melded into each other but emphasizing collaboration for information and adjusting behaviors. We're really thinking, this is how we're navigating the situation. This is how we're continuing to support this family. We're providing resources. We're keeping the conversation going. We're providing education about why this is important. You can meet with the children separately and educate them on what safety is, and if they want to talk with anyone about what they've undergone. “Make sure that you, as a caseworker, understand the difference between discipline and abuse”. I think that's important.

If it, in this case, does amount to abuse, then how can you support the family in improving the ways that they use discipline with their children? Wonderful. “Do a little research on the family culture and how it's handled in their culture, whether it's through elders, through the mosque, or through a family member”. “What other community resources can help provide the information in a way that it will be heard and in the most palatable way?” “Providing more resources if they want to talk to a specialist. You don't have to do all this work alone”. These are really great. I'm going to move on in the interest of time. Really appreciate all of your contributions.

MW: Distinguishing poverty from neglect. I remember, as a kid, hearing a parent say, a wealthier parent, "It's bad to let your child wait outside alone for the school bus. That feels neglectful." That's something that someone can only really say from a place of privilege, that they have the time and the resources to drive their child to school every day. A lot of kids, including myself when I was a child, didn't have other options because my parents had to work. A school bus is an official, sanctioned public service.

I took the school bus. I did not grow up in poverty or neglect. A lot of what resources are available, that can be a matter of perspective. Who's looking and judging? How can we support the strengths of the situation? We know that a lot of our clients, unfortunately, are struggling with poverty, which is when a caregiver does not have the resources to provide for the need. What other ways can we support clients who are in poverty? This is different from neglect, when a caregiver has the resources but chooses not to provide for the need. Child taking a school bus, again, that's a government-sanctioned service. That is not neglectful. A parent who is really struggling to put food on the table but is trying their best, is trying to find the resources, that as out of poverty, that's not neglectful.

Really connecting families to resources is the heart of our work in refugee resettlement and in case management. We're responsible to proactively connect families to resources and educate them on resources to avoid the negative consequences of poverty. That's not necessarily neglect. We're really often, as

mandated reporters, in the position to be effective supporters. When we can, we can connect a family to local supports, child care resources, home visiting programs, food programs. We know that food is a big thing on people's minds these days, and nutritional support, or medical and other mental health support. Linking a family to resources doesn't take the place of reporting if you suspect abuse or neglect, but it can still support and help mitigate some of those adverse effects of poverty or marginalization and ensure that we don't end up in a situation of abuse or neglect.

MW: Interacting with authorities or with child welfare. I saw some questions come in the chat with this. A lot of refugees are unfamiliar with or have deep fears of law enforcement and authorities. It can be specifically child welfare authorities because they come from countries or contexts in which people in uniform kidnap children for militias. Child protection can often be seen as a way, unfortunately, from folks who've had this experience to try to take children away or infiltrate a family. We want to try to provide some education about the difference between bad government actors that they may have encountered in the past and child welfare authorities who are a more clinical social service body.

Many refugees come from cultural contexts in which exercising rights with authorities or the government is foreign or fear-inducing. Why is the government asking? Why are they talking to us? Do I have rights? Even if someone is undergoing a mandatory report, they still have rights, and how they navigate these, there has to be due process. Explaining these things that it doesn't mean the report has been made, and that's it, you have no more rights. You still have rights as a person in this country. I had an Eritrean client who was really afraid to advocate for his rights with benefits. Even though he received this page that said, "You couldn't appeal this decision," because he came from a country that you couldn't argue with the government. You can ask more questions, ask for more information, say, "This is actually what happened." Helping our clients understand that, that they can advocate for themselves, and you can support, and of course, if they need interpretation, those kinds of things.

MW: When it's possible and safe, how can we advocate for cultural responsiveness and effective interpretation from a child welfare agency if we see that that's not quite happening? That's the way that we can complement the work of the child welfare agency. We want to try to emphasize that we all have the shared welfare and well-being of our children or vulnerable adults in mind. That's why we're trying to work with child welfare authorities, make the report, and then support to make sure that everyone gets the support that they need. We're really here to emphasize that we want to support safety.

We want to stay impartial when reporting. We all have prejudices. We all can have stereotypes, even if we're unaware of them, but they can guide our decision-making about whether to report. Recognize what stereotypes or untrue assumptions you have. I assume this kind of group perpetrates more violence than that, so I'm more likely to try to make a report in that sense. Really try to ask yourself what those prejudices are and how you can overcome them. Identify strengths in the family. Our next section is going to be somewhat about this. Don't solely examine risks. How are these parents providing for their children? What are the strengths in their culture that I see that they really care about? How can I see this in a strengths-based lens as well?

MW: I want to recognize that if we either receive a disclosure or we observe something that looks like a threat to safety, we can be in a state of elevated fear or concern. Let's give ourselves a minute to make sure we've examined the strengths. We've taken a deep breath, that's that calm, the see and I care. We've thought about the situation and acknowledge and accept our worry about the danger, and then assess, do we still have that reasonable suspicion or has it been clouded by just some of that fear or other stereotypes we might have.

In this way, we want to keep practicing cultural responsiveness and think about what strengths the family has, what strengths does their culture have, what is helping create safe, physical, and emotional spaces for children, becoming culturally responsive to achieve greater consistency in our reporting practices across the board, and ultimately, better outcomes for children and vulnerable adults.

4. Maintaining Client Confidentiality and Trust Through Mandatory Reporting

MW: Finally, we're going to go into our last section here about maintaining client confidentiality and trust through mandatory reporting. How do we continue to build rapport with our clients to make sure they know that we are working with them and not against them, and for the well-being of everyone? I want to emphasize here that mandatory reporting is client support. It's not antagonistic. It shows that we have the shared goals of safety and wellness, that we all care for the family's welfare, that we want people to be safe and to be secure, that parents from all cultural backgrounds want the best for their children. I worked with so many families that parents said, "We came here to give my children a better life, a better chance at education. How can we do that within the US context and the context of US laws?" We know that immigrant and refugee families have often made significant sacrifices to seek a better life for their children.

That's that first point on top here, shared goals of safety and wellness. We're looking at cultural adjustment. We know that families are learning new norms. That's the second part of this circle. Even if they're learning new norms, we know that the US child welfare system, refugee parents, our agency, they all share an important fundamental value of protecting our children, concern about our children's safety and future. This is a lot of times why families have come to the US. We want to build on this shared interest, that shared value, to increase understanding about parenting needs and practices across cultures. Finally, that third part of this circle is being strength-based, the ability to learn and change. That we know our parents have a lot of strengths and that they can grow and change, and that we can correct some of these behaviors that may be illegal here or culturally inappropriate, and say, "I know you care about your children. This is a way that we can do this more effectively and safely for children and for vulnerable adults." These are really important ways that mandatory reporting is a form of client support and being allied with your clients and always connecting folks to resources, to further cultural orientation, or material resources that they need to better support their families.

MW: When do you want to discuss general mandatory reporting with clients? You want to discuss it off the bat, early, and often in initial client meetings and rapport building. These are the things that are confidential when you tell me, "I cannot keep confidential if I learn of child abuse or neglect. I will have to make a report." Again, some of that stuff is in that sample script that Claire shared. It's important to really

give that information early so it's not a surprise and to make sure they know that a lot of other things they share with you are confidential, but things that fall under mandatory reporting are not. You can go over it again in number two, with client rights and responsibilities or number three, with notices of privacy practices. Do not share your information, but if I learn of child abuse and neglect, I do have to report it to the relevant authority. With the client rights and responsibilities, that can often come with you have the responsibility to treat people around you with respect and case workers with respect. I have the responsibility to make a report if I learn of this mandatory reporting incident. Finally, number four, just via ongoing reminders. If something seems like a gray area or you're doing cultural orientation around acceptable discipline or child-rearing in this country, you can remind about mandatory reporting.

MW: We've got our next case scenario here. Nzinga is a single mother from the Democratic Republic of Congo with three children, Emmanuel is eight, Teresa is six, and Veronique is four. One of your volunteers has been asked to pick up Nzinga for her employment intake at the agency office. As the volunteer and Nzinga leave the house, Nzinga reminds the kids that the neighbors will be keeping an eye on them until she returns. The volunteer felt uncomfortable leaving the children behind, but she did not have appropriate car safety seats to bring them along. When the volunteer brings Nzinga to the office, she tells you about the kids at home. You decide to take Nzinga home after the appointment to see for yourself. It is after dark, and the kids are home alone. What are some steps you could take in this situation? Going back to our Slido here.

[pause]

“Ask about the neighbors”. We can head back to the Slido. Thank you. Let's see if any other responses can come through. “See if there are resources for car seats so she can bring the kids to the next appointment”. “ASAP, cultural orientation”. “Speak to the neighbor. How or where were they monitoring the kids?” “Talk to the parents”. “It's not appropriate to leave your children at home”. “I would not have taken her to the appointment and rescheduled until she had childcare”. That's a great option. “Just explaining the state laws about age requirements”.

“Make sure they have the information so they can do better”. “Be proactive”. “Train volunteers to find solutions in the moment to avoid the need for mandatory reporting” or more, I would say, to find a way to make the situation better. “Remind them about mandatory reporting and your role in state laws”. “Make proper arrangements the day before”. "Hey, if childcare is an issue for you to come to this appointment, how can we help? How can we make sure you have the car seats to make it to this appointment, or how can we make sure you have a babysitter? Those kinds of things.

“More educational home visits”. I love this. It's about reframing in terms of resources, in terms of education, sharing and informing about the state laws, and supporting them. "How can I help you do it better next time? How can I help you make sure you have car seats, make sure you have proper childcare as you go through?" These are really, really great answers. Thank you all. What are ways that we can involve clients in the reporting, if safe and if possible?

MW: I want to say off the bat, it may not be safe or possible if the client's adversarial, if you're worried about the child's safety or your safety. Sometimes you're reporting about someone else, an alleged abuser who is not the main caregiver or the person you're interacting with, or even if they are, if you feel that it's safe and possible to report, some advantages are that it can empower clients. It can dispel fears about child welfare and any involved authorities. You're a part of this. We're all trying to improve the situation for your children and for your family. If you're part of that, number two is that it can show authorities the client is looking for help and is non-adversarial. They want to improve. They want to make things safer. They are willing to cooperate.

Some disadvantages is, if it's obviously dangerous to a caseworker or to clients, it can create antagonism or mistrust. You're under no obligation to tell clients that you've reported if you think that's not safe. This is only if you think that it's safe and supportive to the situation. In certain situations, it could be against state protocols or agency practices. You want to be aware of those to your specific state or agency. Note that even if you do think it's safe and possible for clients to be involved in the reporting, they may always decline involvement in reporting. They're under no obligation to participate in the reporting. You still have to make the report. You could say, "Hey, do you want to make this report with me? I think it might show that you're not adversarial." They could say, "I understand you have to make the report, but I **don't want to be involved." That's totally part of their rights as well.**

MW: After reporting, we know that reporting, unfortunately, can make a situation temporarily more dangerous for the client. We want to think about how we can help a client stay safe and stable. We'll discuss safety planning in a moment. Briefly, this isn't a training about safety planning, but it is important to say that that can be a really big part of this process. Supporting the client and saying, "We're trying to support you in getting the safety and stability you need." You still have a duty to serve the client. Someone brought this up in the case of the Afghan family, which I really appreciate, that the father is still your client. You have to remain professional and supportive, and non-adversarial. You're trying not to create more fear or friction, even if you had to make that report. You want to maintain those important boundaries, make sure that you're keeping everyone's safety and stability in mind, but to stay professional, you're continuing to work together. When you can, just say, "We're all working together in these best interests, and this is how we're working on it."

If you feel unsafe because of your reporting, even though you've kept that confidential in the case notes, please get support from your agency or supervisor. That is, you are supposed to be absolutely protected. That is not a reasonable thing to request of caseworkers to put themselves in danger. Really work with your agency and supervisor to set up those appropriate safeguards for yourself.

Safety planning may be warranted when there is ongoing or increased risk to a client's safety because of reporting. Someone's trying to retaliate. Where can they go? What is safe? Can they have a different phone? If both the victim and offender are clients, you do have that responsibility to serve both, but you want to make sure that a victim or survivor, they have access to a safety plan or know what they're going to do if things get worse. If office workers could be endangered or they feel less safe in their community, it's really important to create that safety plan.

I think my colleague Claire is going to drop a couple of helpful resources to help you get started thinking about safety planning. These are also in the recommended resources for this training, which we'll be sending out. I really hope that you take some time to learn more about safety planning so you can properly support these clients.

MW: We're going to go into our last case scenario. Anna is a woman from Ukraine who has recently arrived and moved in with her cousin, who is also her US tie. In your most recent home visit, Anna tells you privately she cannot stand how her cousin and his wife treat their adult son with disabilities. She says the parents often punish the son for urinary incontinence by locking him in the closet or withholding his dinner. She says she has never seen the family physically strike him, but he sometimes cries and moans from the closet. Anna reports otherwise feeling safe and comfortable in the home. This is our last Slido. How can you support Anna as well as the family, even though they are not your clients?

[pause]

“Suggest to Anna that she make a report”. Maybe you and her can make the report together. I think you do have to make sure a report is made. You could make it with Anna, but if she's not interested, she's not legally obligated, you need to report it, and you can refer Anna to resources. “Witnessing neglect could be considered abuse, so supporting Anna through that, you still need to contact authorities”. “Can we make a report if even they're not our client?” Yes, it's very important that you make a report, even if they're not your client, and you want to support Anna through, is she going to become housing insecure, because the report has been made, or how can you affirm Anna's feelings? I'm seeing that it's difficult.

Then referring the client to psychoeducation to medical services. You are not the one responsible for that cultural orientation, but what other community services are available that you can make sure they get the support and the psychoeducation they need to support their family. You might need to help Anna find alternative housing. Excuse me. Absolutely. “Provide the information resources”. “Connect her to a native speaker”. I'm seeing, "Making sure that we are having interpretation." “Thank Anna for trusting me with that information”. “Offering to make the report with her or for her”. You will have to make that report but including her if that's something that is helpful or will feel supportive.

MW: These are really important contributions. I really appreciate it. Thank you all for your engagement today. In our last 10 minutes here, I'm going to take some time to answer some common questions. I've got some here that folks are asking, and some that I reviewed previously that you all submitted. I really appreciate all of your support. Sorry, I mean all of your engagement and attendance in this training.

I think some important questions here. Someone asked, "What safety tips are recommended for a case manager to take after reporting, if clients can figure out who did the reporting, even though that information is confidential?" I heard a lot of this in the Slido, but ensuring your supervisor is in the loop, and they can take over communication. If the things escalate, if it's safe, being honest about having to make a report for everyone's safety and well-being. Ensuring the clients you're still working with them towards everyone's joint goals of safety and wellbeing. I worked with a

family where the mother and daughter were very eager to be a part of the reporting and cooperate with the investigation, because the abusing party was the father, and they wanted support in removing him from that situation.

MW: "How do I trust that the systems in place will protect my clients, especially in these uncertain times?" I want to really acknowledge the gravity of this question, and I see a lot of similar questions. This is a difficult time. No system is perfect. I'll be the first to say that. Mandatory reporting can be stressful because we care so much about our clients. We're not privy to everything that happens after the report, or how those systems will interact with our clients. I want to again remind folks that child welfare authorities is different from other kinds of law enforcement. There's a lot of clinically trained, or folks with some training there to try to support clients in the same ways that you are trying to support clients. If you are able to continue advocating for and supporting clients through the process of the report, you can continue advocating for language interpretation and other culturally responsive services. Making sure the clients know what to expect as these reports happen or as they liaise with child welfare authorities, and what their rights for due process are.

If we know these systems have generally been established to support clients and provide safety, we can speak up if we see how things could be better. It's a good way to try to navigate this uncertainty. "Hey, can you make sure you have the right language interpreter? Hey, can you keep in mind that this family has seen a lot of instability, or comes from this specific culture?" This might be helpful to keep in mind. Protective services will treat client information with discretion and confidentiality and follow many of the same clinical practices that we follow in our daily work. Really just trying to encourage that culturally responsive and collaborative support. I also want to mention that a lot of times, authorities will not just remove a child from a home. That's not the first step folks take. These agencies realize that unless things are imminently and unequivocally dangerous, protective services will determine what's the safest and best thing for the client while also trying to minimize disruption and trauma throughout the process.

MW: Got a really good question about when child abuse happened in the child's home country, does the abuse need to be reported? Mandatory reporting is really about mitigating imminent and immediate abuse and neglect. What is at risk now to continue if people are in danger now? If a client discloses previous abuse or neglect to you that is not current, whether from a while ago or from before resettling in the US, take steps to support the client in a trauma-informed manner and connect them to mental health and supportive resources. There's no need to make a report, but you want to keep supporting that client. We have a lot of resources here at Switchboard about trauma-informed care and ways that you can connect folks to mental health and psychosocial services.

When working with clients from cultures where certain family members, maybe men, might dominate conversations, what are ways to share this information? This is a really good question. Making sure all family members receive this important education in their language and with culturally responsive messaging. If you need to share that messaging separately, so say, visit a women's group or a youth group and share, "Hey, these are some of the indicators of abuse and neglect. This is what my role is in this as a mandated reporter." That can be maybe a safer space to make

sure clients get the information in a culturally responsive way, and they can ask clarifying questions, or they can air their concerns.

MW: Looking here at some of the questions. I see a lot of more specific questions. For example, "For a child's mental health, which one is better, staying with abusive parent or growing without a parent?" That's not something that I can answer. Generically, that's going to be really dependent on the situation. That's part of your role in the child's welfare authorities who are doing the investigation. Is this something that can be overcome and worked on, or would it really be best for that child to be removed from a home from an abusive parent? There's just a full spectrum of situations.

Having cases with Child Protective Services does not impact immigration status in any specific way. It's a social service, and it's kept confidential as possible. It's important to keep that in mind. This does not have a direct effect on immigration status.

"Is the discovery of a marriage and pregnancy of a minor something that needs to be reported? There might be a cultural marriage when one individual is not yet 18." That's a good question. I would say younger than 16 is something that you want to address specifically. There are teen pregnancies. This is something that happens. It's not necessarily abuse or neglect, but it's definitely a situation to look into. To keep in mind that legal marriage age in the US is 18. Making sure that clients have the right to speak up for themselves and provide consent in their relationships. That can change if one person in the relationship is no longer a minor or if both people are minors, depending on your state laws. That's really something to look into with your local state laws.

MW: Going back to the example with the Afghan family, "What if some clients use religion as a justification for corporal punishment?" Really great question. There's a lot of protective and really strong good factors about religion. In that case, in particular, we have different resources at Switchboard about Muslim healing practices and things. You can assure that you are going to be religiously and culturally responsive to folks and their religions, but still emphasize that what is legal and not legal in this country, what is considered a abuse or neglect, and what those differences are, that we can respect religion in all these ways, but that in this country cannot be a justification in this case.

I'm going to answer one more. "What consequences are there to making a report that you felt was reasonable but turns out not to be true for any given reason?" My understanding is there's no consequences. You may not even know that the report has been dismissed. You've made the report, and you've done what you needed to do, and then the rest will happen. It's okay if you thought that report needed to be made, but there was information you didn't have, and they've decided not to investigate that further. You made the report in good faith. You thought it was reasonable. There's a lot of things that might happen. We try to follow up with clients where we can and support them, but there's a lot of things that might happen behind the scenes that we don't know. We're just doing our role and position to try and support the clients where we can.

MW: I know there's probably a lot of other questions and important comments. I really want to thank you for your time. I want to encourage you to reach out to Switchboard if you have other questions. We hope that at the end of today's training, you're now able to describe key principles of mandatory reporting in reportable situations such as abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults, identify who may be a mandatory reporter and possible steps of the reporting process, integrate special considerations for working across cultures with newcomers in the mandatory reporting context, and apply client-centered and trauma-informed principles to maintain client confidentiality and trust while upholding mandatory reporting responsibilities.

We will be sending out these recommended resources with the slides. A few of them have been dropped in the chat, including those sample scripts. All those links will be clickable, and you will be able to access them when you receive that follow-up email tomorrow. Finally, we really ask you to help us help you. Please take this short feedback survey. Claire has put the link in the chat, or you can scan that QR code. It's four questions. It's anonymous. Take you 60 seconds or less, and it really helps us improve our future training and technical assistance. I'm going to be quiet for a moment to give you a little bit of time to fill out that survey before you log off.

[pause]

Great. Thank you for filling out the survey. We really appreciate you being here. If you have further questions on this topic or any topic related to serving refugees and newcomers, we really encourage you to stay connected. Email us at switchboard@rescue.org, follow us on LinkedIn, go to our website and our resource library, or follow us on YouTube to learn more about what we offer. Thank you for being with us today. I really appreciated it and all your active engagement in the Slido, and I hope we'll be able to learn together again soon. Thanks.

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