Reflecting on Abuse and Neglect
Kate's Story: Part 4

You have learned a lot in the past few lessons about Kate and her family. Take some time to reflect on Kate's experiences and the experiences of her family.

1. As a family child care provider, it is important for you to know that Kate's family child care provider did everything she could to protect Kate. She did everything right.
   a. What should we learn from this?

   First, communication is critical. Child abuse and neglect is complicated. Often, there are many witnesses across many different locations. Each witness only has one tiny piece of information. It can be very challenging to put all of the pieces together. Our systems must be designed to help collect information and make accurate decisions. Work closely with the Family Advocacy Program to provide information you have. Learn about resources in your community and on your installation.

   Second, education is critical. At several stages in Kate's story, experts misinterpreted Kate's injuries or the family's needs. Again, child abuse is complicated, and a false accusation can have serious repercussions, so experts are naturally hesitant. When multiple signs point to child abuse or neglect, though, our systems should be able to recognize a pattern and provide the family with preventive supports.

   Third, resources and protective factors are critical. Kate's family clearly needed support. At the earliest signs of violence, a community support network (mental health support, violence prevention) should have been put in place for Kate and her family.

   b. What can you do to make sure you do your part to keep children safe?

   Take these stories as a clear message that we must all work together to protect children. We each play a role, and we must do our jobs well. Your job is to report your suspicions. You must trust that everyone else does their jobs well, too. Talk to your coach or training and curriculum specialist about Family Advocacy Programs. Know who your FAP teams are and talk to them about the work they do and how they can support your work

2. Imagine Kate were a child in your family child care home:
   a. Describe your emotions the first time you notice the scars on Kate's arms and make your first report.

   You might feel nervous, scared, or angry. You might feel embarrassed that you hadn't noticed the older scars before. You might feel doubtful that it is abuse.
b. Describe your emotions when Kate is withdrawn from the program.

You might feel disappointed or angry. You might feel scared for Kate's safety. You might feel embarrassed, ashamed, or remorseful if someone shares with you that the doctor said it was not abuse. But remember you did the right thing. You should feel proud for speaking up for Kate.

c. Describe your emotions when you hear Kate's stepmother talk about whipping children.

You might feel angry or offended. You might feel spurred to action.

d. Describe your emotions when you learn that the military police have been called to Kate's home and found her in such terrible conditions.

You might feel very angry. You might be in disbelief. You might feel frustrated that the situation has come to this. You might even feel relieved that law enforcement is aware of the situation.

e. Describe your emotions when you know that the Family Advocacy Program and law enforcement are involved in Kate's story.

You might feel relieved that Kate's parents are getting the help they need. You might feel reassured that Kate is safe. You might also feel a strong need to know more about the follow-up Kate is receiving, but confidentiality laws will prevent you from getting more information. This might feel frustrating, but it is important to respect the privacy of families.

3. Now imagine that your best friend was Kate's provider. What would you tell her? How would you support her? What do you think she would need?

It would be important to listen. Let your friend talk, cry, and get angry. When she is ready, make sure she knows that she has done the right thing by making reports. Encourage her to consider counseling if the stress of the situation is challenging. As Kate's provider, your friend might feel empowered to advocate for children and for additional supports and resources for families.