



FAQS ABOUT REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT (DHS & CHILDWELFARE.GOV) NAD Youth Ministries Safety Resources

Q. WHERE DO I REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

A. Each State has a system to receive and respond to reports of possible child abuse and neglect. Professionals and concerned citizens can call statewide hotlines, local child protective services, or law enforcement agencies to share their concerns. For more information, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/>

The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline - 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Serving the United States, its territories, and **Canada**, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://www.childhelp.org/hotline/>

Q. HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD MALTREATMENT

A. Anyone can report suspected child abuse or neglect. Reporting abuse or neglect can protect a child and get help for a family, it may even save a child's life. In some States, any person who suspects child abuse or neglect is required to report. To see how your State addresses this issue, read the Information Gateway publication, *Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/>

Q. WHO MUST REPORT?

A. Any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect should report such incident. Reporting abuse or neglect can protect a child and get help for a family, it may even save a child's life. In some States, any person who suspects child abuse or neglect is required to report. To see how your State addresses this issue, read the Information Gateway publication, *Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/manda.pdf#page=2&view=Reporting> by other persons



Q. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE?

A. A person making a report of child abuse shall make an oral report by telephone or otherwise to a local Child Welfare office of the Department of Human Services/CPS, to the division's designee, or to a law enforcement agency within the county where the person making the report is at the time of the contact. A law enforcement agency can be defined as a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or State Police.

Q. HOW DO I RESPOND TO A CHILD WHO REPORTS ABUSE TO ME?

A. Believe the child if she/he reports sexual abuse. It is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse. So, tell the child that you believe them and that you are going to contact people who can help. Respect the privacy of the child. The child will need to tell their story in detail later, so don't press the child for details. Remember, you need only suspect abuse to make a report. Don't display horror, shock, or disapproval of parents, child, or the situation. Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child.

Q. WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED TO REPORT?

A. If possible, report the names and addresses of the child and parent; the child's age; the type and extent of the abuse, as well as any previous evidence of abuse; the explanation given for the abuse; and any other information that will help establish the cause of abuse or identify the abuser.

Q. WILL MY REPORT BE CONFIDENTIAL?

A. The reporter's identity will remain confidential to the full extent allowable by law. If court action is initiated, the reporting person may be called as a witness or the court may order that the reporter's name be disclosed. Only people with firsthand knowledge of the child's situation can provide testimony proving that abuse has occurred.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I REPORT?

A. Child Protective Services (CPS) follows a process that includes six possible decision points for every child abuse report. For each call CPS receives, the process begins with screening. If the



information indicates possible abuse, a caseworker assesses the family situation by getting more in-depth information and determines whether abuse occurred and whether a child is at risk of further harm. If a child has been abused or neglected, CPS and law enforcement staff decide, with family help, if possible, whether the child can be safely left at home. Risk factors, strengths and needs of the child and family are assessed. A safety plan may be developed immediately. Later, the agency and family may develop a plan for service. A case is closed when protective services are no longer needed to keep the child safe.

Q. WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

A. If you need more information on child abuse and neglect, contact your local child welfare branch office of the Department of Human Services. If someone is being hurt or is in danger right now, call 911 immediately. Report child abuse to your local Department of Human Services (DHS) or a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or State Police.

STATE LAWS ON REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

For State Laws on Reporting and Responding to child abuse and neglect, visit
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/can/reporting/>

More FAQs

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/aboutus/faq/can/>

Additional Child Protection Resources:

www.NADYouthSafety.org