

Newsletter

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Mandatory Reporting

As adults, we have a moral, and in some cases, legal responsibility to care for the children in our communities. In some cases it means taking the step of reporting possible abuse and neglect to criminal or civil authorities. Professionals, required by law to report abuse and neglect, should not only be aware of their duty to report, but also know to whom they report, how to respond to a child who reports, and what happens after a report is made. This information is equally important to parents and guardians because children spend so much time in the care of others.

Every state within the United States has mandatory reporting laws for child abuse and neglect. The law in Wisconsin states that mandatory reporters who have reasonable cause to **suspect** that a child (17 and under), seen by the person in the course of professional duties, has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that the abuse or neglect of the child will occur, shall report the suspected abuse or neglect. (For more details about the statute go to <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/statutes/Stat0048.pdf>)

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires all employees to exercise reporting responsibilities for any suspected physical or sexual abuse of minors, whether or not designated as mandatory reporter under Wisconsin law. Clergy were made mandatory reporters by state law in 2004, however, there are some specific rules that apply to them and can be obtained at the website mentioned above.

Amy Peterson
Victim Assistance Coordinator
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What Reporting Means

A person who must report shall immediately inform, by phone or in person, the county department, the sheriff, or police department of the facts and circumstances contributing to a suspicion of child abuse or neglect or a belief that abuse or neglect will occur.

Who May Report

Any person who has reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect and the abuse or neglect will occur.

Protection

Any person or institution acting in good faith in making a report shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that results by reason of the action. The good faith of any person reporting shall be presumed.

No person making a report may be discharged from employment for so doing.

Confidentiality

General Rule: All reports made under this section and reports maintained by an agency, other persons, officials, and institutions shall be confidential. (There are many exceptions to this rule, please see statute for details.)

What Information Do I Need To Report

If possible report the names and addresses of the child and parent; the child's age; the type and extent of the abuse, and information that can establish the cause of abuse or identify the abuser.

How Do I Respond To A Child Who Reports Abuse To Me?

Let the child know that you believe them and that you are going to contact people who can help. Don't press the child for details; remember you only need to suspect abuse to report and the child may have to tell their story in detail later. Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child. Again believe the child and in cases of sexual abuse remember it is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse.

Persons who must report:

coroner
 physician
 medical examiner
 nurse
 dentist
 chiropractor
 optometrist
 acupuncturist
 medical or mental health professional not otherwise specified
 social worker
 marriage and family therapist
 professional counselor
 public assistance worker
 school teacher
 school administrator
 school counselor
 mediator
 child-care worker
 day care provider
 alcohol or other drug abuse counselor
 member of the treatment staff employed by or under contract with
 bureau of child welfare or residential care center for children
 physical therapist and/or assistant
 occupational therapist
 dietitian
 speech-language pathologist
 audiologist
 emergency medical technician
 first responder police or law enforcement officer



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