

Child Abuse Reporting Laws

To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call (612)348-3552 (24 hour Hennepin County Child Protection Line) or (651)266-4500 (24 hour Ramsey County Child Protection Line). If you work with children in Minnesota, the law requires that you report suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of children to authorities.

Getting help for children who are experiencing abuse or neglect involves the efforts of many people in the community. A community in which children can be safe and grow with the care of adult people does not just happen. It takes vigilance, a willingness to change whatever hurts children and a commitment by many to be involved on behalf of children.

As a person who works with children and families, you are in a key position to be aware of child abuse and neglect and to report whatever comes to your attention. This guide is designed to help you make a decision about when a child needs special protection and what to do about it.

Most importantly, we want to emphasize the importance of calling Child Protection or your local police when you have reason to believe a child is neglected or abused. The law requires you to report suspected child maltreatment. The law assigns the responsibility for determining the existence of maltreatment to the county's Child Protection program. However, they must first hear from you. Call them to discuss the situation, so they can determine with you if intervention is necessary and if other resources might be helpful to the family.

WHO MUST REPORT

Anyone may report abuse or neglect. Under our state law, however, people who are required to report include: "A professional or his delegate who is engaged in the practice of the healing arts, social services, hospital administration, psychological or psychiatric treatment, child care, education, law enforcement or employed as a member of the clergy." Each mandated reporter retains the independent responsibility for deciding whether to report, and for ensuring that a report is made. Many school districts also require simultaneous reporting to the principal. It is recommended that school employees familiarize themselves with their district's policy regarding mandated reporting.

WHAT YOU MUST REPORT

Although the law has gone through several changes in recent years, the central point is the requirement to report neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse which has affected children or currently is endangering them. Remember that child protection would prefer that you call about whatever comes to your attention. They will help sort things out. A general guideline is, "when in doubt, call Child Protection at: (612)348-3552 (Hennepin County) or (651)266-4500 (Ramsey County)."

WHEN TO CALL

You may call Child Protection at any time about any case of neglect or abuse. When a child is abandoned, or subject to a real or imminent threat, call your local police department or county sheriff's office immediately. Officers can remove a minor from a threatening environment in order to protect a child. They can cooperate with other government agencies through investigation and gathering evidence in critical cases.

WHAT CHILD PROTECTION NEEDS TO KNOW

When you call, they will need information that will allow us to identify the family, evaluate the problem, and respond quickly and appropriately.

They need to know what happened to the child and when, how you view this situation, what firsthand knowledge you have, where the child is now, and if the child is in immediate danger. They always need to know the names and addresses of the parents or caretakers, and your name and phone number. Let them know if you have been involved with the family, or if you have made attempts to work with them on the problem. It is helpful if you can tell them how the parents responded to any attempts to help.

WHY REPORT TO CHILD PROTECTION

By legal mandate and Hennepin County policy, Child Protection has a specialized role in working with children and their families. Briefly, Child Protection's responsibilities are to:

1. Respond promptly to reports of alleged neglect, abuse or exploitation of children to determine the validity of the report
2. Assess the damage to children resulting from neglect or abuse
3. Evaluate the risk of further injury to the child while rehabilitative services are provided
4. Determine and identify the family problem or problems which contributed to or resulted in neglect or abuse
5. Evaluate the potential for treatment to correct conditions and rehabilitate the family
6. Plan a course of treatment calculated to stabilize and rehabilitate the family through services of the protective agency and the use of other appropriate community resources to meet special needs of the child and the parents.