

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (Source: Maryland Department of Human Resources – <http://www.dhr.state.md.us>)

You should report suspected abuse or neglect to the local department of social services or to a local law enforcement agency.

If you are a health practitioner, educator, human service worker or a police officer, you are required to report both orally and in writing any suspected child abuse or neglect.

Oral reports should be made immediately and written reports must be made within 48 hours of contact which disclose the suspected abuse or neglect.

A report must include:

- The name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child;
- The present location of the child;
- The age of the child;
- Names and ages of other children in the home;
- The nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse or neglect of the child
- Any information relayed by the individual making the report of previous possible physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Information available to the individual reporting that might aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect;
- The identity of the individual or individuals responsible for abuse or neglect

If reporting abuse or neglect of a child involving mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified and why it is believed to be attributable to an act of maltreatment or omission of proper care and attention.

All reports of abuse must be made to the local departments of social services and the appropriate law enforcement agency. To initiate prompt handling of the report of suspected child abuse or neglect, employees of a local department of social services must make a report to the protective services unit.

Mandated Reporters

You are a mandated reporter if you are one of the following:

- Health Practitioner
- Educator
- Human Service Worker
- Police Officer

This does NOT require PROOF that abuse or neglect has occurred before reporting. Incidents are to be reported as soon as they are suspected. Waiting for proof may involve grave risk to the child and impede services to the family. Proof may be long in coming, witnesses to child abuse and neglect are rare, and the child's testimony may be disbelieved or inadmissible.

If you knowingly fail to report suspected abuse of a child, you may be subject to professional sanctions by licensing boards. Anyone that makes a "good faith" report is immune from civil liability and criminal penalty.

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NOTE: In rulings by the State's Attorney General, clergy fall under the category of "human service worker."