

Mandated Reporters / Child Abuse Reports

Child Welfare Services 781-1700 to report a SCAR

(You must call and fax or mail a written report. Written forms are available on line or in the office)

All paid staff serving children are Mandated by California law to report any knowledge or suspicion that a child's safety or welfare is at risk. *It is your responsibility to REPORT, not to investigate.* Reports should be made immediately and no later than 24 hours after suspected abuse is observed.

There are two types of reporters

1. **Mandated:** those, such as school employees, who are required to report suspected child abuse. These reporters have a legal duty to report and can be held liable for not reporting.
2. **Discretionary reporters** – those who report simply because they develop a concern for a child's welfare.

Circumstances for Reporting:

ANY Reasonable Suspicion: if a person is suspicious, based on observations that could create a reasonable person with his/her training and experience to suspect child abuse.

Knowledge criteria – this includes actual observation of child abuse or obtaining knowledge of abuse.

Obstacles: Many people are afraid to make a report because of denial, fear of making a mistake, fear that the parent may be angry, the belief that nothing happens when you make a report, or that it makes things worse.

You are LEGALLY responsible to report if you have "reasonable suspicion" of abuse and obtain this knowledge during the course of your work. You are NOT required to prove the abuse or collect evidence. You could be found legally liable if you do not report and the child victim or another child is further victimized because of your failure to report.

Types of Abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual Abuse – Assault or Exploitation
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect – General, Severe, Caretaker Absences

What to report:

- Physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means on a child. Consider developmental abilities when assessing injuries.
- Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Perpetrators in most cases are family members. Unusual sexual behaviors that are not necessarily age appropriate should be reported. Again, we report based on concerns, we do not investigate.
- Emotional Abuse is any act which results in mental suffering or when a child's emotional well-being is endangered. This includes verbal assaults, belittling, threats, blaming and screaming, continual negative mood, domestic violence that affects the child's emotional wellbeing, neglect, and emotional deprivation.

- Intimate Partner Violence. California is one of the few states that mandates reports of abuse between adolescent/teenage couples.
- Neglect is the #1 form of abuse. Neglect occurs when parents are unable or unwilling to provide the basic needs such as food, shelter, medical care, or educational needs. This also includes failure to protect a child.
- Homelessness. In and of itself it is not reportable unless it includes specific instances of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or emotional abuse. The priority is to provide necessary shelter, food, medical care, education and services.
- Substance/ Alcohol abuse. Again, not necessarily reportable as “child abuse” unless it impacts the child’s wellbeing and has ongoing endangerment.
- Religious Considerations: Using spiritual means of healing instead of medical **is not reportable** unless it could result in the death or disfigurement of a child which would be a case of medical neglect.

Red Flags of Child Behaviors

- ✚ Hostile, aggressive, verbally abusive towards others
- ✚ Anxious, fearful or withdrawn
- ✚ Self-injuries
- ✚ Destructive
- ✚ Frightened of going home
- ✚ Frightened of parents/caretaker
- ✚ Attempts to hide injuries
- ✚ Frequent absences from school.
- ✚ Clingy, forms indiscriminate attachments
- ✚ Tries to be perfect

Red Flags of Parent Behaviors

- Mental Health issues
- Domestic Violence
- Unemployment
- Poverty – inadequate food, clothing shelter or medical care for the children
- Lack of Social Support
- History of abuse as a child
- Substance abuse

Report any concerns about possible abuse to CWS as soon as possible, and no longer than 24 hours of becoming aware of suspected abuse. To report, call 781-1700 CWS or after hours 24 hr line 781-KIDS (5437). For immediate safety issues contact Law Enforcement (911) who will cross report to CWS