

# Guidelines for Reporting Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect

All persons who work with children in Minnesota are **required by law** to report suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of children by an individual, to the local Police and/or Social Services Department. This includes any suspected abuse or neglect occurring within the preceding three years.

If you believe that a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, talk first to the staff at your tutoring site. You are a volunteer and only see the student for an hour or two a week. Teachers and staff may have background information about which you are unaware. Also, discuss the situation with the ACT Tutoring Coordinator or Candace Lutt.

If, after talking to the teacher and/or staff, you believe that you need to report the suspected neglect or abuse, do so immediately. You should call the child protection unit located in the county where the suspected abuse/neglect occurred. The number in Northfield is (507) 645-4723 and the 24-hour emergency number for Rice County is 1-800-422-1286.

When a child is abandoned or subject to an immediate threat, call the local Police Department immediately. Law enforcement officers are the only people who can immediately remove a minor from a threatening environment in order to protect the child.

## ***What does Child Protection need to know?***

It is the responsibility of Child Protection to investigate all reports of abuse and neglect and to offer appropriate services directed toward protection of children and improvement of the family situation.

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

They need to know what happened to the child and when the abuse occurred. How did you find out about this situation and what is your first-hand knowledge? Where is the child now and is the child currently in danger? Child Protection needs to know the names and addresses of the parent(s) or caretaker(s) and your name and phone number.

## ***What happens after you call in your report?***

You are legally required to follow your verbal report as soon as possible with a written report. Feel free to use a social worker as a resource at any time.

# Indicators of a Child's Potential Need for Protection

## Physical Abuse

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### Physical indicators:

- Unexplained bruises (in various stages of healing), welts, human bite marks, bald spots
- Unexplained burns, especially cigarette burns or immersion burns (glove like)
- Unexplained fractures, lacerations, or abrasions

### Attitude indicators:

- Self-destructive
- Withdrawn aggressive behavior extremes
- Uncomfortable with physical contact
- Arrives at school early or stays late as if afraid to be at home
- Chronic runaway (adolescents)
- Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably
- Wears clothing inappropriate to the weather that covers the body.

## Physical Neglect

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### Physical indicators:

- ❖ Abandonment
- ❖ Unattended medical needs
- ❖ Consistent lack of supervision
- ❖ Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, or poor hygiene
- ❖ Lice, distended stomach, emaciated

### Attitude indicators:

- ❖ Regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class
- ❖ Steals food, begs from classmates
- ❖ Reports no caretaker at home
- ❖ Frequently absent or tardy
- ❖ Self-destructive
- ❖ School dropout (adolescents)

## Emotional Maltreatment

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### Physical indicators:

- ❑ Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies
- ❑ Speech disorders
- ❑ Delayed physical development
- ❑ Substance abuse

### Attitude indicators:

- ❑ Habit disorder (sucking, rocking)
- ❑ Antisocial, destructive
- ❑ Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
- ❑ Passive-aggressive / behavioral extremes
- ❑ Delinquent behavior (esp. adolescents)
- ❑ Developmentally delayed

## Sexual Abuse

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### Physical indicators:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting

- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia
- Venereal disease
- Frequent urinary or yeast infection
- Massive weight change

**Attitude indicators:**

- Withdrawal, chronic depression
- Excessive seductiveness
- Role reversal; overly concerned for siblings
- Poor self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence
- Peer problems, lack of involvement
- Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)
- Hysteria, lack of emotional control
- Sudden school difficulties
- Inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex
- Threatened by physical contact, closeness

# Reporting of Maltreatment to Minors Act

*What follows are excerpts from the Reporting of Maltreatment to Minors Act, Minnesota Statutes, Section 626.556. More information about child abuse and neglect is available in the ACT Center. A complete copy of the Act can be found at <http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/626/556.html>.*

Subdivision 1. **Public Policy.** The legislature hereby declares that the public policy of this state is to protect children whose health or welfare may be jeopardized through physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse. In furtherance of this public policy, it is the intent of this legislature under this section to strengthen the family and make the home, school, and community safe for children by promoting responsible child care in all settings; and to provide, when necessary, a safe temporary or permanent home environment for physically or sexually abused or neglected children.

In addition, it is the policy of this state to require the reporting of neglect, physical or sexual abuse of children in the home, school, and community settings; to provide for the voluntary reporting of abuse or neglect of children; to require the assessment and investigation of the reports; and to provide protective and counseling services in appropriate cases.

Subdivision 2. **Definitions.** As used in this section, the following terms have the meanings given them unless the specific content indicates otherwise:

(b) "Person responsible for the child's care" means (1) an individual functioning within the family unit and having responsibilities for the care of the child such as a parent, guardian, or other person having similar care responsibilities, or (2) an individual functioning outside the family unit and having responsibilities for the care of the child as a teacher, school administrator, or other lawful custodian of a child having either full-time or short term care responsibilities including, but not limited to, day care, baby-sitting whether paid or unpaid, counseling, teaching, and coaching.

Subdivision 3. **Persons mandated to report.** (a) A person who knows or who has reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, as defined in subdivision 2, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years, shall immediately report the information to the local welfare agency, police department, or the county sheriff if the person is:

- (1) a professional or professional's delegate who is engaged in the practice of healing arts, social services, hospital administration, psychological or psychiatric treatment, childcare, education, or law enforcement; or
- (2) employed as a member of the clergy and received the information while engaged in ministerial duties, provided that a member of the clergy is not required by this subdivision to report information that is otherwise privileged under section 595.02, subdivision 1, paragraph (c).

The police department or the county sheriff, upon receiving a report, shall immediately notify the local welfare agency orally and in writing. The local welfare agency, upon receiving a report, shall immediately notify the local police department or the county sheriff orally and in writing. The county sheriff and the head of every local welfare agency, department, or office who is responsible for ensuring that the notification duties of this paragraph and paragraph (b) are carried out. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to require more than one report from any institution, facility, school, or agency.

- (c) A person mandated to report physical or sexual child abuse or neglect occurring within a licensed facility shall report the information to the agency responsible for licensing the facility. A health or corrections agency receiving a report may request the local welfare agency to provide assistance pursuant to subdivisions 10, 10a, and 10b.
- (d) Any person mandated to report shall receive a summary of the disposition of any report made by that reporter, unless release would be detrimental to the best interests of the child.

Subdivision 6. **Failure to Report.** A person mandated by this section to report who knows or has reason to believe that a child is neglected or physically or sexually abused, as defined in subdivision 2, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years, and fails to report is guilty of a misdemeanor. A parent, guardian, or caretaker who knows or reasonably should know that the child's health is in serious danger and who fails to report as required by subdivision 2, paragraph (c), is guilty of a gross misdemeanor if the child suffers substantial or great bodily harm because of the lack of medical care. If the child dies because of the lack of medical care, the person is guilty of a felony and may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than two years or to payment of a fine of not more than \$4,000