

Report It!

What To Do If You Suspect Child Abuse

What should I do if I think a child has been abused or neglected?

Call the local child protective services agency or department of human services. If you have concerns about a family residing in _____ County, call Children Services 24 hours a day at _____. You will be connected to a specialist in the Intake department.



What if the person causing the harm or neglect is someone I know? Can I call anonymously?

We understand that you may be reluctant to tell us who you are, or even hesitant about calling at all. Reporting child abuse is not pleasant, especially when it involves the children of a relative, neighbor or friend. However, the worst thing you can do is nothing. Before you make the decision not to call, remember that the abuse or neglect the child may be experiencing will likely continue if you fail to act.

Yes, you can make a report anonymously, but we prefer that you give us your name. Your identity will be kept confidential; we will not give your name to the person allegedly harming the child, nor to the child's family.

What information do I need when I make a report?

The more information you can provide, the better we will be able to assess the level of risk to the child. At a minimum, we'll need:

- 1) The child's name;
- 2) How to locate the child;
- 3) A description of the alleged abuse or neglect.

In order to better assess the situation, you will also be asked to provide, if possible, the following:

- ✓ The name, address, and telephone number of all of the following:
 - The child;
 - Yourself;
 - The child's caretaker
 - The child's guardian (if different from the caretaker);
- ✓ The child's approximate age and what is known of her/his behavior and level of functioning;
- ✓ When and where the alleged abuse or neglect occurred, what happened to the child, how serious it is, and how long it has been going on;
- ✓ When, where, and how the child is at risk of abuse or neglect;
- ✓ Are you aware of any prior incidents of abuse/neglect experienced by the child?

- ✓ The circumstances surrounding the abuse/neglect or any other information which might be helpful in understanding why it happened;
- ✓ What do you know about the behavior and parenting abilities of the person(s) caring for the child?
- ✓ What has been done to reduce the risk to the child?
- ✓ What actions have been taken? (Has the abuse/neglect been documented with photographs? Has the child received medical attention? Have the police or sheriff been notified?);
- ✓ Who allegedly committed the abuse/neglect and where can we find this person? Does this person still have access to the child?
- ✓ The names and approximate ages of other children living in the home, and their relationship to the child victim;
- ✓ Have any other children in the home been victims of abuse and neglect, and if so, who was the perpetrator?
- ✓ The names and whereabouts of anyone else with knowledge of the abuse and neglect.

What information am I entitled to?

Just as you have confidentiality rights as a reporter of child abuse and neglect, the family of the child has an expectation of privacy as well. Therefore, in accordance with the law we do not provide any information about our investigations.

However, if you are a mandated reporter (see below) you are by law entitled to certain information:

- ✓ Disposition of your report -- whether or not Children Services will initiate an investigation;
- ✓ Notification of when the investigation is complete;
- ✓ Whether or not Children Services will continue its involvement with the family after the investigation has been concluded;
- ✓ Whether or not Children Services is otherwise involved with the child who is the subject of the report;
- ✓ The general status of the health and safety of the child who is the subject of the report;
- ✓ Whether or not the report has resulted in the filing of a complaint in juvenile court or of criminal charges in another court;
- ✓ Identification of a designated contact person at Children Services;
- ✓ Any information that would assist in service provision to the child.

Does the law require me to report child abused and neglect?

Although Ohio law encourages everyone to report alleged child abuse and neglect, in most cases it is an option left for personal and moral decision. The exception is those professions that have an inherent responsibility to report. The ethical commitment to families and children that these professionals have accepted through virtue of their positions is recognized under Ohio law, and thus they are mandated to report alleged child abuse and neglect.

The [Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421](#) (*link to orc.avv.com*) clearly removes the option of choice, and requires immediate reporting of known or suspected alleged child abuse and neglect for the following professionals:

- ✓ attorney
- ✓ physician, including a hospital intern or resident
- ✓ dentist
- ✓ podiatrist
- ✓ registered nurse
- ✓ licensed practical nurse
- ✓ visiting nurse
- ✓ other health care professional
- ✓ licensed psychologist
- ✓ licensed school psychologist
- ✓ speech pathologist or audiologist
- ✓ coroner
- ✓ administrator or employee of a child day-care center
- ✓ administrator or employee of a certified child care agency or other public or private children services agency
- ✓ school teacher
- ✓ school employee
- ✓ school authority
- ✓ social worker
- ✓ licensed professional counselor
- ✓ person rendering spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion

How do I know that Children Services is investigating my report?

We take every report seriously, rest assured. If there is enough information available to suggest a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, we will most certainly investigate.

However, because we must keep case information confidential, and because we try our best to keep children in their own homes, there may be occasions when those who report child abuse and neglect do not see any immediate change in the situation. Because the child is not removed from the home or they do not hear back from Children Services, they may mistakenly conclude that we are not taking action.

But in fact, we are taking action. If we determine that children are at risk of abuse or neglect, we're already working to connect the family with community services that will help them toward stability.

For more information on what happens after a report is received, [click here](#). (*link to follow a child.doc*)

What if my concerns about a child being abused or neglected are later found to be unsubstantiated? Can I be sued or charged?

Although no statute can forbid the filing of civil or criminal charges, state law protects the reporter of alleged child abuse or neglect from any decision or award which might be sought through the filing of a claim, provided that the reporter acted in good faith and did not knowingly make a false claim.