



Alabama — Recognizing, Reporting, & Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect

(Mandatory Reporter Version)

HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE

If a Child May Have Been Abused or Neglected: Contact the local Department of Human Resources or call 1-334-242-9500.

If a Child Is in Immediate Risk/Danger: Call your local law enforcement or 911.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

Get free and anonymous help 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.



Childhelp® National Child Abuse
Hotline: 800-4-A-Child (800-422-4453)
www.childhelp.org/get_help

Quick Reference Guide



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*A service of LawRoom in support
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Children Program*

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT ABUSE?

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE

What To Teach Children

- ▶ how to say “no” to abuse
- ▶ how to run away from abusers
- ▶ how to recognize potential abusers
- ▶ how to report suspicious people
- ▶ how to seek help from safe adults
- ▶ not to accept gifts without their parents’ knowledge



What to Warn Them About Online Usage

- ▶ clarify permitted and forbidden websites
- ▶ be aware of the dangers of online predators
- ▶ do not reveal personal information online
- ▶ do not engage in “private chats” online
- ▶ do not meet online friends in person without parent’s permission
- ▶ alert parent if they’re contacted online by a stranger
- ▶ people on the Internet can lie about themselves

What to Watch Out For

- ▶ adults more interested in youth activities than adult activities
- ▶ adults giving gifts to unrelated children
- ▶ changes in the child’s behavior



What You Should Do

- ▶ participate in their lives daily
 - ▶ know where they are at all times and with whom
 - ▶ enhance their confidence
 - ▶ listen to what they say
 - ▶ discourage them from being alone with unrelated adults
 - ▶ consult the sex offender registry
 - ▶ ensure multiple adult supervisors at youth events
 - ▶ keep computer in family room
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- ▶ monitor the websites they visit
 - ▶ join them online
 - ▶ learn about or meet their online friends
 - ▶ be the “administrator” on the computer
 - ▶ insist on having their account passwords
 - ▶ install software to limit website access

Physical Abuse

Is any non-accidental or threatened injury that include death, internal injuries, fractures, burns, sprains, dislocations, or other loss or impairment of a bodily function.

It does **not** include:

- parents disciplining their child using reasonable, age appropriate physical force that is not over-reactive to the behavior or situation, and which does not expose the child to serious injury.

Sexual Abuse

- **Sexual conduct:** sex acts; exposing genitalia; touching a child for purposes of sexual gratification, or having a child sexually touch another person.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** permitting, encouraging, or requiring a child to engage in prostitution, or in the photographing, filming, or depiction of sex acts.

Emotional Abuse

Occurs when a parent or caretaker withholds affection from a child, and when a parent or caregiver exhibits extreme or aberrant behavior that can impair a child’s functioning.

Neglect

Refers to when a parent, guardian, or other caregiver fails to meet a child’s basic physical, medical, or emotional needs.

How Can I Recognize Child Abuse?

Any of the following physical, behavioral, parental, or environmental clues, alone or in combination, may give you cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected. **Suspicion is enough** to make a report!

PHYSICAL CLUES

- facial injuries (black eyes or swollen lips)
- multiple injuries in different stages of healing
- unattended medical problems or infections
- bite marks (animal or human)
- bruises or trauma on back, buttocks, or thighs
- repeated series of bruises or broken bones
- burns from objects, rope, or liquid
- pain or injury around genital area
- urinary tract infection
- sexually transmitted disease
- significant increase in physical complaints
- painful urination or defecation
- self-inflicted injuries (cuts or burns)
- signs of malnutrition (thin, fainting, hunger)
- extremely offensive body odor



BEHAVIORAL CLUES

- extreme anxiety, guilt, or shame
- unexplained crying
- difficulty sleeping or recurrent nightmares
- regressive behavior (acting much younger)
- clinginess or acting excessively responsible
- fear of certain adults
- extreme dependency on other adults
- increasing isolation and withdrawal
- running away from home
- depression or passivity
- increasing aggressiveness
- extreme anger and verbal abuse
- inappropriate sexual behavior
- dramatic change in school performance
- suicidal ideas
- substance abuse
- failure to bathe regularly
- excessive bathing
- inappropriate clothes for the weather
- filthy or unkempt clothes
- bedwetting

PARENTAL CLUES

- unwilling to provide for child's needs
- indifferent to child's condition or safety
- unable to explain child's injury
- gives improbable explanation for child's injury
- cannot describe anything positive about child
- constantly and angrily criticizes child
- states destructive thoughts about hurting child
- uses belt, or other object to discipline child
- discipline of child is impulsive or out-of-control
- expects child to serve or fulfill adult's needs
- describes child as "evil"
- has unrealistic expectations about child's development

ENVIRONMENTAL CLUES

- broken windows
- lack of utilities (heat, water, electricity)
- faulty electrical fixtures
- insects, mice, or rats
- spoiled food
- unsanitary kitchen
- garbage or hazards in the yard
- yelling or crying heard from outside





Who Are Mandatory Reporters in Alabama?

Mandatory reporters work in occupations where they are likely to identify child abuse and neglect during the course of their work.

They:

- ▶ are required to report child abuse once they reasonably suspect it.
- ▶ are required to submit a written report to the civil authorities.

Why Make a Report?

In 2005, an estimated 899,000 children in the United States were found to be victims of child abuse or neglect. And by most estimates, this is a small percentage of the actual child abuse/neglect cases.

Although everyone has a responsibility to prevent this maltreatment and protect children, certain professionals are mandatory reporters and are legally required to report child abuse and neglect.



YOUR PROTECTIONS

Mandatory Reporters

Liability...

Reporters who fail to report suspected abuse or neglect:

- **can be guilty** of a misdemeanor and face up to 6 months in jail or a fine up to \$500.
- **can face civil liability** for harm caused by failing to report incidents of abuse or neglect.

Immunity

Reporters **cannot be held liable** for making a **good faith** report of suspected child abuse or neglect, even if it turns out false.

Confidentiality

Agencies will not release information in any reports of abuse or neglect unless required by federal or state law.

HOW DO I MAKE A REPORT?

- ▶ Do **not** "investigate" suspected child abuse/neglect in an attempt to prove it. Leave the investigation to the experts. All you need is **reasonable suspicion** that abuse has occurred (or is occurring) to make a report, which can be based on a single incident or multiple factors.
- ▶ Once you suspect abuse, **immediately call** your local law enforcement agency if it is an emergency or the local Department of Human Resources.

*****Don't worry** about calling the wrong agency. Each agency, if needed, will transfer the report to the correct agency. Agencies are committed to working together to ensure the safety of the child. So **make the call**. A child's safety depends on it.

- ▶ Reporters will be asked to provide certain information, including your name and telephone number; the name and location of the child; and information about the abuse or neglect, and the suspected abuser (if it is known).
- ▶ After submitting your initial oral report, submit to the appropriate agency a written report of your suspicions.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The applicable law enforcement agency or child protection agency will **perform an investigation** after receiving a report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Its response time will depend on its assessment of the danger to the child. Its goal is to **ensure the safety of the child** and to begin providing services and resources to the family.

However, if a child is in danger at home, the child will be removed to safety.

After the law enforcement agency or child protection agency conducts its investigation, mandatory reporters may follow up to find out what actions were taken regarding the child.