

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is defined by law as harm or threatened harm to a child's health or safety by the person responsible for the child's health or welfare, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Physical Abuse: non-accidental physical injury to a child under the age of 18.

Sexual Abuse: sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent for the sexual gratification of another person.

Physical Neglect: failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child under the age of 18 with the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, protection or supervision.

Psychological Maltreatment: rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting, corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness, mental health, medical and educational needs. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at a given time.

WHO IS REQUIRED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE?

State law requires every person, private citizen or professional who has reasonable cause to believe that a child under 18 is being abused or is in danger of being abused MUST report the suspicion of abuse to the Department of Human Services (DHS) or the police department.

Failure to report suspected abuse is a crime legally and wrong morally. No person, regardless of his or her relationship with the child or family, is exempt from reporting suspected abuse. A person reporting in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal prosecution.

Reporting is not an accusation or a proven fact. It is a REQUEST for an investigation to gather facts and protect the child from harm. YOU DO NOT NEED TO PROVE THE ABUSE prior to reporting. Your role is not to be an investigator, therapist or social worker. DO NOT try to probe or gain more information. Your primary responsibility is to REPORT. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibility of DHS and/or law enforcement officials.

A child/minor should never be made to repeat his/her disclosure to a colleague or supervisor so a suspicion can be confirmed and a report made. Multiple interviews before DHS or law enforcement are contacted can taint an investigation and possibly jeopardize the safety of the child.

If additional incidents of abuse occur or are suspected after the initial report has been made, another referral to DHS with additional concerns and information should be made.

HOW DO I REPORT A SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE?

RECORD the date, time and a factual account of the meeting with the child or minor as soon as possible after meeting with him/her. Sign the account.

It is preferable the person with direct knowledge of abuse or neglect make the report.

REPORT immediately to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services using the 24 hour Hotline Number (1-800-522-3511). *IF THE CHILD IS IN IMMINENT DANGER, CALL THE POLICE.*

REPORT any suspected or known abuse of minors by church personnel by calling the Archdiocesan Hotline (405-720-9878). The Safe Environment Coordinator will contact the Vicar General.

REPORT any suspected or known abuse of minors by church personnel to your parish priest, the principal of the school or your supervisor.

IS THE REPORT I MAKE CONFIDENTIAL?

DHS and state law require strict maintenance of the confidentiality of the reporters of child abuse. If the incident does become court involved, the reporters name could be requested by the court. It is rare, however, for the identity of the reporter to be known in court. Anonymous reports are also accepted for investigation. Reports to the Archdiocese are also confidential

REPORTING

Be Prepared To Give:

- The child/minor's name and present location
- Family name and address
- Names, ages of siblings, (if any)
- Language and ethnicity of family
- The suspected perpetrator's name, if known
- A description of what you have seen or heard
- The names of any other people having knowledge of the abuse
- Your name and phone number (report can be made anonymously)
- School, church or work address

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE REPORT IS MADE?

Currently the report is screened by a supervisor to determine if the allegation meets the statutory definition of abuse and neglect, and if the report falls within the scope of responsibility of DHS. If the alleged abuse is perpetrated by someone other than a caretaker, DHS is required to forward the report to law enforcement. DHS is mandated to investigate or conduct assessments regarding allegations of abuse or neglect by a parent or caretaker. The difference between a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation vs. assessment is this:

- A CPS **Investigation** is conducted when the report concerns abuse or neglect that is serious, could be extremely dangerous, or when there have been many previous reports of abuse or neglect.
- A CPS **Assessment** is conducted when the report concerns abuse or neglect that is not serious or extremely dangerous.

DHS has three priority levels. Assignment to either CPS Investigation or CPS Assessment is based on the potential risk to the children named in the report.

PRIORITY ONE indicates imminent danger of serious injury. Response by DHS is generally within hours of receipt of the report, but no longer than 24 hours.

PRIORITY TWO indicates there is no imminent danger of serious injury, but the child will not be safe without intervention. Response is within 48 hours to 15 days depending on risk to the child.

PRIORITY THREE indicates there is no imminent danger or injury alleged. Response is within 15 to 30 days.

After a report is accepted for investigation or assessment, as much information as possible is gathered. The child/minor often is seen first. Family members, including the alleged abuser and other persons having information are interviewed about the incident.

A determination is made regarding the findings of the CPS investigation. No findings are made on CPS Assessments. All reports are forwarded to the District Attorney. One of the following findings for CPS investigations will be made:

- services not recommended
- services recommended
- confirmed – services recommended
- confirmed – court involvement

WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE EXPECTED FROM DHS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE?

Anyone who reports child abuse may obtain information on the status of a referral. Information that can be obtained may include whether the referral was investigated and how the investigation was ruled. You, as a mandated reporter, however, are NOT entitled to the details of the investigation.

RYAN LUKE BILL

The Ryan Luke bill specifies that schools are NOT responsible for notifying parents that a child/minor was interviewed at school regarding a child abuse report. The task for notifying parents is the responsibility of DHS.

GUIDELINES WHEN A CHILD/MINOR DISCLOSES

DO believe the child. Let the authorities validate or rule out whether any abuse happened

DO stay calm, receptive and non-judgmental. Be careful not to criticize or belittle the child's family.

DO reassure the child/minor that he/she has done the right thing by telling and that he/she has the right to be safe.

DO listen carefully, with sensitivity and without interruption.

DO use the same vocabulary that the child/minor uses if you need to clarify any part of his/her disclosure. Document in the file the specific words that the child used, even if graphic.

DO ask only enough information to clarify your suspicion and help you decide whether the child/minor is in danger.

DO NOT start your own investigation.

DO NOT ASK leading questions. For example, do not ask the child/minor for information they have not provided voluntarily and without prompting.

DO tell the child/minor that you have to tell someone who can help him or her.

DO give a clear and simple explanation of what will happen next. Tell the child/minor that the law requires you to report the abuse to child welfare. Tell the child/minor that a social worker who helps families with these kinds of problems may be coming to talk with him/her.

DO seek out support to help you work through your emotional feelings about the disclosure (if needed). Listening to an abusive experience can be difficult.

DO NOT suggest to a child/minor, or an adult for that matter, that he/she has been abused. It is never appropriate to place that suggestion into either an adult or minors mind.

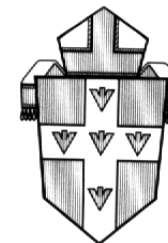
Children Our Greatest Asset



If you have been the victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon or individual representing the Catholic Church in the United States there are several things you can do

- Contact the Department of Human Services (800-522-3511). Reporting is mandatory if the victim is a minor.
- Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to determine if the incident fall within the statute of limitations in the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred.
- Contact local child protection agencies, a private attorney and/or a support group.
- Contact the Office of Safe Environment or the Archdiocesan Hotline. Both numbers are on the front of this brochure. The Assistance Coordinator will assist you in making a formal complaint of abuse to the Archdiocese, arranging a personal meeting with the Archbishop or his representative and obtaining support and pastoral counseling.

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF MINORS



**Child Abuse Hotline Number
1/800/522-3511**

**Archdiocesan Hotline Number
1/405/720-9878**

**Office of Safe Environment
1/405/721-5651 Ext 150**

Website – www.catharchdioceseokc.org

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