

How to Report Child Abuse

When should I report?

According to the Texas Family Code, Section 261.101, a person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be affected by abuse or neglect must make a report. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse or neglect exists. If you are reasonably suspicious, you **must** report. A professional working with children must make a report **within 48 hours** of first suspecting a child may have been abused or neglected. **This may not be delegated** to another party, nor can the professional rely on another to make the report. **The requirement to report applies without exception to an individual, whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged**, including an attorney, a member of the clergy, a medical practitioner, a social worker, and a mental health professional.

Will the parents be told that I reported?

The identity of an individual making a report is confidential and may be disclosed only on the order of a court or to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of conducting a criminal investigation. If the case goes to court, you may be requested to testify.

Can I be sued by the parents?

A person acting in good faith who reports or assists in the investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect or who testifies or otherwise participates in a judicial proceeding arising from a report, is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed.

What if I don't report?

A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report.

How do I report?

Call the hotline at 1-800-252-5400, the police or the sheriff, at the Child Abuse Unit, 834-3890; or 911 in an immediate emergency.

What information goes into a report?

A report should include: the child's name; age; current condition; present location; and specific information about the nature of the abuse and the current incident. You should also include: parent's names; address; directions to the home; names of any siblings; and names of possible witnesses. **Make it clear if you think emergency intervention is required.** Include your name and telephone number so that the investigator can get further information, if necessary.