**WHAT EDUCATORS MUST DO WHEN YOU HAVE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THAT**

**A CHILD’S PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH OR**

**WELFARE IS ENDANGERED AS A RESULT OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

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**Important: This contains dated material, subject to change. Revised August 2025**

Educators are in a unique position to play a crucial role to obtain badly needed help for children who are victims of abuse or neglect. Educators are “mandatory reporters.”

**If you have cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare is endangered as a result of abuse or neglect or that abuse or neglect was a contributing factor in a child’s death you are required to immediately make a report to the appropriate child protection or law enforcement office. If you fail to make a report you face possible arrest.**

**You may be subject to arrest if you fail to make a report.**

# WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

**When a child’s physical or mental health or welfare is endangered as a result of physical abuse, or sexual abuse such as sexual battery, carnal knowledge of a juvenile, indecent behavior with a juvenile, pornography involving juveniles, molestation of a juvenile, or contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile, or neglect.**

# WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

Some "warning signs" are repeated skin injuries and bruises, punctures and burns to the skin, or repeated fractures. Children are often fearful and have a difficult time expressing the terrible things that have happened to them. The child’s explanation may sound suspicious. A child may become suddenly withdrawn, is unusually fearful, or constantly seeks attention, or talks about inappropriate topics. You may want to look for sudden and unusual poor school performance and adjustment.

# HOW DO I KNOW WHETHER I AM REQUIRED TO MAKE A REPORT?

You are required to make a report if you have cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare is endangered as a result of physical abuse, or sexual abuse, or neglect.

# DO I NEED DEFINITE PROOF OF ABUSE BEFORE I MAKE A REPORT?

No. You are not required to have proof that abuse, or neglect has occurred before you report it.

# WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON WHO COMMITTED THE ABUSE? AM I STILL REQUIRED TO REPORT IT?

Yes, you are still required to report child abuse even if you don’t know the identity of the person who you have cause to believe abused or neglected the child.

# AM I PERSONALLY LIABLE IF I MAKE A REPORT AND IT TURNS OUT THAT THE CHILD WASN'T ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?

If you made your report in good faith, you are immune from liability.

# IS IT TRUE THAT I MAY BE ARRESTED IF I FAIL TO MAKE A REPORT?

**Yes!** If you have cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare is endangered as a result of abuse or neglect, and you willfully fail to report it, you may be accused of a **criminal offense**.

# IS IT NECESSARY THAT I MAKE MY REPORT IN WRITING?

Possibly. Your initial report should be by telephone, but you may be required to submit a written report.

# WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN WHEN I MAKE A REPORT?

A caseworker should immediately begin to check out the facts. If the child is in danger, a Judge may place the child under the protection of the state.

# CAN I GIVE MY REPORT ANONYMOUSLY?

No. The written report must include your name.

# HOW DO I MAKE A REPORT?

Mandatory reporters should immediately make the report to the Department of Children and Family Services. The DCFS hotline is 1-855-452-5437. You may also report the abuse to your local Sheriff’s Office or Police Department.

You should ask for the name of the person you contacted; in case you are later accused of failing to make a report.

You should also notify the school social worker and your supervisor after you make your

report.

# ISN’T IT OKAY JUST TO NOTIFY THE SOCIAL WORKER OR PRINCIPAL AT MY SCHOOL?

No. Louisiana law requires you to immediately make the report to the authorities. If you are a member of the Federation or have questions or problems, contact the Federation for assistance.

# DIDN’T THE LAW CHANGE IN 2024?

Yes, to make it clear that mandatory reporters must first IMMEDIATELY make the report to authorities.