

Mandatory Reporting & Child Abuse Prevention

Families come in all shapes and sizes and may not fit traditional expectations. Just because a family doesn't align with your perception doesn't mean they require reporting. Often, they may simply need support rather than intervention.



Things to Consider:

- Do I know enough about the circumstances to understand the family's risk and protective factors?
- What is my understanding of the parent's unique cultural background?
- How are my own experiences impacting my understanding and assessment of the parent?
- Is the parent's prior history influencing my decision despite evidence of change?

What Does Not Justify a Report, but May Require Support?

- **Family financial struggles:** Share information about and encourage access to financial assistance programs.
- **Parental stress:** Recommend parenting classes or counseling resources.
- **Minor injuries from accidents:** Suggest medical follow-up if necessary.
- **Behavioral issues:** Refer to school counselors or child psychologists for guidance.

Who Are Mandatory Reporters?

Mandatory reporters are professionals and volunteers who work with children, youth and families.

Some key groups include:

- **School Personnel**
- **Healthcare Professionals** (dentists, nurses, medical examiners, pharmacists, and medical practitioners, etc.)
- **Social Workers** (staff and volunteers from Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)/Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Ombudsman's, and HOPE centers)
- **Law Enforcement** (juvenile probation and Department of Corrections (DOC) Staff)
- **Child Care Providers**

While this list covers those legally required to report, it does not exclude those who wish to report and fulfill other caregiving roles. Learn more about who is required to report child abuse and neglect by scanning the QR code at the bottom of the page.



If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired and wish to report suspected child abuse or neglect, you can use a Relay Service (such as 711 or 1-800-833-6384) to connect with the Statewide intake line at 866-363-4276.

What Must Be Reported?

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual exploitation
- Severe forms of trafficking in persons
- Negligent treatment or maltreatment
- Abandonment

Full definitions can be found in RCW 26.44.

How to Report

1. **Recognize:** Identify signs of abuse or neglect.
2. **Record:** Note relevant details (date, time, observations).
3. **Report:** Contact the appropriate authorities immediately.

Contact Information

Call **866-363-4276** or find your local intake number by scanning the QR code below to find office information.

Legal Obligations

Failure to report can result in legal consequences.

Consequences of Making a False Report (a report you know is untrue)

- Legal action can be taken against individuals who knowingly make false reports.
- False reporting can divert resources from real cases and harm innocent people.
- A person who intentionally makes a false report of abuse or neglect is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by RCW 9A.20.021. (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9A.20.021>)

Reporting child abuse can have profound and lasting effects on the families involved, influencing their relationships, dynamics, and emotional well-being. If possible, prioritizing support over reporting can help minimize the lasting impacts on families while still addressing the needs of the child.

RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT: All families experience stressors, and everyone needs support at some point. By helping families discover their inner resilience, you can positively influence their trajectory and foster lasting change.

Parent Trust for Washington Children: Provides support and resources for families. Call 1-800-932-4673 or visit Parenttrust.org

Help Me Grow Washington: Help Me Grow is a free service that connects parents and caregivers to resources in their community including understanding child's development, food assistance, free or low-cost health insurance as well as pregnancy and parenting resources. Learn more at <https://helpmegrowwa.org>



For More Information:

Use the QR Code, or go to www.dcyf.wa.gov/safety/report-abuse

Protective Factors

Research identifies five protective factors that effectively prevent child abuse and neglect. Families that are equipped with these are better positioned to lower stress and reduce associated risks. Learn more at <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/child-development-supports/sfwa>

Parental Resilience:
I can overcome hard times.

Knowledge of Parenting and of Child/Youth Development:
I know where to go to find out about parenting skills and my child's developmental growth.

Social Connections:
I have people who know and support me.

Concrete Supports:
I know where to turn for help.

Social and Emotional Development:
I know how to help my children talk about their feelings.