All suspected child abuse and neglect of any minor in the State of Delaware must be reported to the 24 Hour Division of Family Services (DFS) Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line at 1-800-292-9582. However, when a child’s life is in danger, you should call 911 immediately, before calling the Report Line.

Online reporting is also available at Iseethesigns.org. Online reporting is not for all allegations of abuse and neglect, and the site will give you direction about whether a call to the Report Line is needed.

What should you do if you suspect child abuse or neglect?
- If you observe physical or behavioral indicators, ask Minimal Fact Questions, such as:
  ✓ What happened?
  ✓ When did that happen?
  ✓ Where did that happen?
  ✓ Did you tell anyone what happened?
- Write down child’s exact words if you must speak to child.
- Avoid expressing disbelief, shock or anger, etc.
- Avoid value judgments and accusatory statements.
- Thank the child for telling you and tell child it is not his/her fault.
- Tell the child you have to report the abuse to a professional.
- Make a report to the Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line above.

What information can DFS share if the school initiated the report?
- That a response was made, and whether the child is safe or the child was placed out of the home;
- Who is allowed to have contact with the child;
- Explain to the school if there is something the school should be doing, such as referring to a guidance counselor;
- Who the school should call if something else happens to the child; and
- When the child’s placement changes, if the child was placed out of the home.

*Contact the assigned caseworker directly to obtain the above information. If a new incident of abuse or neglect occurs, the information should be reported directly to the Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line.

Actions to Avoid
- Do not interview the child beyond Minimal Fact Questions.
- Do not take picture of the injuries.
- Do not ask the child to undress (exception-medical providers, including school nurse).
- Do not notify the parent/caretaker you are making a report.

Information Needed to Make a Report
- Demographics, AND
- Known information about the following:
  ✓ parents or siblings;
  ✓ the alleged child victim’s physical health, mental health, educational status;
  ✓ medical attention that may be needed for injuries;
  ✓ how the caregiver’s behavior is impacting the care of the child; and
  ✓ if the child’s or DFS worker’s safety may be in peril.

How to Identify and Report Child Abuse & Neglect in Delaware
Created by the Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC), January 2014
**Physical Abuse**

**Physical Indicators:**
- Human bite marks
- Bald spots
- Unexplained burns on arms, legs, neck or torso
- Unexplained fractures
- Unexplained bruising, lacerations or abrasions

**Behavioral Indicators:**
- Reports injury by caregiver
- Shrinks at approach of adults
- Complains of soreness & moves awkwardly
- Inability to use an arm, inability to bear weight
- Cannot tolerate physical contact or touch
- Wears clothing that covers body when not appropriate
- Seems frightened of the caregiver and protests or cries when it is time to go home

**Parent/Caretaker Indicators:**
- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child’s injury
- Describes the child as “evil,” or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

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**Neglect**

**Physical Indicators:**
- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or long periods
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs
- Distended stomach, emaciated

**Behavioral Indicators:**
- Is begging or stealing food
- Has consistent fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep
- States there is no caretaker at home
- Has frequent school absences or tardiness
- Lacks needed medical or dental care
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Early emancipation from family

**Parent/Caretaker Indicators:**
- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

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**Sexual Abuse**

**Physical Indicators:**
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody clothing
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitals, vaginal or anal areas
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Frequent unexplained sore throat
- Pregnancies
- Sexually transmitted infections

**Behavioral Indicators:**
- (Younger) Exhibits extremely sexualized behavior/language that is significantly different from same-aged peers
- (Older) Exhibits sexual behavior involving coercion/manipulation of another child
- Bedwetting/soiling
- Runs away, attempts suicide
- Fear of a specific individual
- Refusal to be left alone
- Significant change in behavior/mood/appetite
- Drop in school performance/attendance

**Parent/Caretaker Indicators:**
- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child’s contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

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**Emotional Maltreatment**

**Physical Indicators:**
- Lags in physical or emotional development (e.g., walking, talking, non-organic failure to thrive)

**Behavioral Indicators:**
- Ongoing sleep/appetite disturbance
- Persistent bedwetting/soiling
- Frequent disruptive or aggressive behaviors
- Reports lack of attachment to parent
- Severe withdrawal (e.g., never responding to cuddling, never smiling or making sounds)
- Social isolation
- Starting fires or cruelty to animals
- Fearfulness and clinginess
- Chronic head banging
- Inappropriately adult

**Parent/Caretaker Indicators:**
- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers for help for the child’s problems
- Overtly rejects the child
**Q: How do I make a report?**

A: To make a report call the Division of Family Services (DFS) Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line at 1-800-292-9582 or make a report online at iseethesigns.org. *Online reporting is not available for all types of reports.*

**Q: Can I be held liable for making a report about child abuse and neglect?**

A: As long as you make a report of child abuse or neglect in good faith you will have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal. (Del.C. §908)

**Q: If I call the hotline and make a report do I also need to follow up with a written report.**

A: Yes. In addition to an oral report, DFS requires professional reporters to submit a written report via mail or fax within 72 hours for documentation purposes. The Mandatory Reporting Form can be found at http://iseethesigns.org. For more information about this policy view the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DSCYF and DOE, online: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/ddoe/abou tdoe/workgroups/files/Dec192013MOUcombine d.pdf

**Q: What is the role of the school Family Crisis therapist (FCT) or Behavioral Health Consultant (BHC) in reporting child abuse and neglect?**

A: If the FCT/BHC makes the report on behalf of the school, the school does not satisfy their obligation to report the incident since they are from a separate agency. The FCT/BHC will only make the report if he/she first suspected the abuse or neglect. There may be occasions where both the school and FCT/BHC learn of the abuse or neglect at the same time (i.e. child discloses while both parties are present). A report must be made by each agency, and it would be acceptable for the school and FCT/BHC to make the report at the same time.

**Q: My school has a child abuse reporting policy in place that may affect my ability to make a report. What should I do?**

A: Some schools have internal policies that require employees to report child abuse and neglect to an administrator. It is a good practice to inform your superior that you are making a report. However, you do not need anyone’s permission to call the hotline. Remember, under Delaware law, any person, agency, organization or entity who knows or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect shall make a report. Therefore, no internal policy supersedes an individual’s reporting responsibility.

**Q: If my report is accepted for investigation, how soon can I expect DFS to respond?**

A: DFS responds according to the priority level given to each investigation case

- Priority One- Within 24 hours
- Priority Two- Within 72 hours
- Priority Three- Within 10 days

**Q: Should school employees be present during a DFS interview?**

A: No. DFS Investigation Caseworkers are specifically trained to talk to children about abuse and neglect allegations in a sensitive and supportive manner. The presence of school personnel during an interview is not advised; as it leaves school personnel open to being subpoenaed to testify should the case goes to trial. There are times where it is in the child’s best interest to have a school employee as a support person; however, the DFS investigator should make that determination.
Q: Can information about a DFS investigation be shared?

A: In general, DFS will share information only when there is a signed release of information (informed, time limited consent). However, DFS, law enforcement, the Children’s Advocacy Center and the Department of Justice exchange information on families and children when this information is needed to assist an investigation involving a shared client.

Q: What is the difference between physical abuse and accidental injury?

A: Typically, cuts and bruises from accidents occur in bony areas of the body. Situations that warrant extra attention and documentation include:

- Reoccurring injuries
- A series of injuries that appear in a pattern or resemble an object.

In addition, if the child’s or caregiver’s explanation for the injury is inconsistent with the facts, the injury would be suspect. You should also suspect abuse if there was a delay in seeking medical treatment.

Q: What is considered “normal” vs. abusive sexual behavior in children?

A: Childhood sexual behavior is common and varies based on age/developmental level. However, you should be concerned with childhood sexual behavior that:

- Is clearly beyond the child’s developmental stage (a three-year-old attempting to kiss an adult’s genitals).
- Involves threats, force, or aggression.
- Involves children of widely different ages or abilities (an 11-year-old “playing doctor” with a four-year-old).

Q: At what age can a child be left alone?

A: Delaware law does not specify an age when a child may be left alone. However, DFS policy states a child must be age 12 or older. For any age child, DFS considers factors such as the child’s level of functioning, maturity, physical and mental health, disabilities, length of time left alone, and the time of day.

Q: Is there a correlation between substance abuse and child abuse and neglect?

A: Parental addiction is a significant factor in child abuse and neglect cases, with studies suggesting 40% to 80% of families in the child welfare system are affected by addiction. Additionally, data indicates that abused and neglected children from substance abusing families are more likely to be placed in foster care and to remain there longer than maltreated children from non-substance abusing families.

Q: Is there a relationship between child abuse and other types of abuse?

A: Yes. Studies show that there is a correlation between child abuse, animal abuse, elder abuse and child trafficking.

Q: Should I report domestic violence cases to the DFS Report Hotline?

A: Delaware law does not mandate reports of domestic violence to law enforcement for adult victims. However, domestic violence cases involving children are mandated reports to DFS when the domestic violence is chronic or severe/escalating and impairs the caregiver’s ability to keep the child safe.

Report cases to DFS of child abuse when:

- A child is injured during an incident of domestic violence; or
- A child is not injured but is at risk of injury, such as witnessing domestic
violence when a weapon or a potentially dangerous object has been used, or where a child has attempted to physically intervene in a manner that puts the child in danger of being injured.

Report cases to DFS of emotional harm to a child due to domestic violence when:

- A child is aware of domestic violence (either chronic or single incident) perpetrated against his/her caregiver by a domestic partner and that involves a significant injury to the victim or use of a weapon; and
- The child has a diagnosed mental health condition or behaviors that signify severe psychological harm.

Q: What can schools do to help children in crisis?

A: If the school becomes aware of a child in crisis (i.e. suicide talk or attempts) a report should be made to DSCYF’s Behavioral Health Crisis Services Hotline (Child Priority Response) at 1-800-969-4357.

Q: What can schools do to help traumatized children?

A: Teachers and other school personnel have an important role to play in supporting students who have experienced abuse, neglect and other types of traumatic exposure. There are a number of things that will influence the impact of a traumatic event on a student’s functioning; each student is unique and their reactions to a traumatic event may vary. The links below provide information on different ways a student may react to traumatic exposure and how you can help students who have experienced abuse, neglect and other traumatic experiences. For more information about trauma see: NCTN’s Trauma Facts for Educators http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/ctte_facts.pdf

Additional Child Welfare Resources

Sexual Development and Behavior in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers
http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/sexualdevelopmentandbehavior.pdf

Guidelines for Responding to Teen Dating and Sexual Violence in Delaware Schools
To obtain a copy of the guidelines: http://courts.delaware.gov/childadvocate/CPACReports.stm
For more information, please contact the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) at 302-255-0405.

Darkness to Light’s Stewards of Children™
For more information: www.stewardsofchildrendelaware.org
Onsite/Online Training: Please contact Nikki Mowbray by email at nmowbray@ymcade.org or call 302-254-9622 ext. 133.

School-Based Personal Safety Programs for Children
For more information: http://pcadelaware.org/programs-services/school-programs/
Onsite Training: Please contact Prevent Child Abuse Delaware at 302-425-7490.

Delaware Child Welfare Training Calendar
To view available trainings, please visit: http://www.calendarwiz.com/cpactrainingcalendar

Domestic Violence Resources

- Child Inc.’s Domestic Violence Program
  New Castle County (Bilingual): 302-762-6110
- SAFE Program at People's Place
  Kent and Sussex Counties: 302-422-8058
  Northern Kent County: 302-678-3886
- Abriendo Puertas Bilingual Hotline
  Sussex County: 302-745-9874