



# Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

Karl A. Racine  
D.C. Attorney General

## Reporting Child Abuse: What to Know

### Everyone Has an Obligation to Report Child Sex Abuse

Under District of Columbia law (see D.C. Code §22-3020.52[a]), any person 18 or older who knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, that a child under the age of 16 is a victim of sexual abuse must immediately report such knowledge or belief to the police (911) or the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (202-671-SAFE).

### There are Mandated Reporters Who Must Report All Child Abuse or Neglect

Mandatory reporting requirements help protect children from harmful situations and ensure that law enforcement officials and social workers can immediately begin investigating. In addition to the general obligation to report suspected sexual abuse, D.C. law also requires certain people who regularly work with children to be “mandated reporters” for suspected child abuse or neglect of any kind and for certain other injuries to children under the age of 18 (see below). This means they have a legal obligation to report any kind of suspected mistreatment of children to law enforcement and social services immediately and without delay.

### Who Is a Mandated Reporter?

Mandated reporters are defined by law (see D.C. Code §4-1321.02) as people who must report suspicions of child physical or sexual abuse or neglect. These are people who work in certain professions where they come into regular close contact with children, such as:

- ◆ School officials, teachers, and athletic coaches;
- ◆ Department of Parks and Recreation employees;
- ◆ Public housing resident managers;
- ◆ Social service workers;
- ◆ Daycare workers;
- ◆ Persons involved in the care and treatment of patients, including: physicians, psychologists, medical examiners, dentists, chiropractors, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses;
- ◆ Law-enforcement officers;
- ◆ Humane officer of any agency charged with the enforcement of animal cruelty laws;
- ◆ Child and Family Services Agency employees, agents and contractors;
- ◆ Human trafficking counselors as defined in D.C. Code §14-311(2);
- ◆ Domestic violence counselors as defined in D.C. Code §14-310(a)(2); and
- ◆ Mental health professionals as defined in D.C. Code §7-1201.01(11).



Connect with the Office of the Attorney General

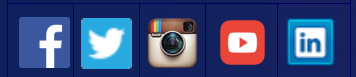
441 4th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001

Phone: (202) 727-3400 Fax: (202) 347-8922 TTY: (202) 727-3400

Email: [dc.oag@dc.gov](mailto:dc.oag@dc.gov)

CONSUMER HOTLINE — (202) 442-9828

STAY CONNECTED:



[www.oag.dc.gov](http://www.oag.dc.gov)

## **When and What Kind of Information Must I Report to Authorities?**

Mandated reporters must report when they know or suspect that a child whom they have encountered through their professional work:

- ◆ Is being neglected (his or her parent or guardian is not providing adequate housing, food, clothing, hygiene);
- ◆ Is being abused (physically or mentally);
- ◆ Is being exposed to domestic violence;
- ◆ Is in imminent danger of being abused due to the abuse of a sibling or other child living in the same household;
- ◆ Has a parent who is intoxicated, incarcerated or suffering from a fault in their mental or physical capacity (i.e. drug use or mental illness) and is unable or unwilling to provide care;
- ◆ Is being regularly exposed to illegal drug activity;
- ◆ Has been or is in immediate danger of being the victim of sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse; is a victim of human trafficking; or has been injured by a bullet, a knife or other sharp object by non-accidental means – regardless of whether the perpetrator was a family member, acquaintance, or stranger.

## **How Do I Report This Information to Authorities?**

You can report this information to the District of Columbia at 202-671-SAFE (202-671-7233).

In addition, here are some important things to know:

- ◆ A mandated reporter working in a hospital, school, social agency, or similar organization, is also required to inform the person in charge of that organization of suspected child abuse.
- ◆ The person in charge of a hospital, school, social agency, or similar organization who receives a report about suspected child abuse from a mandated reporter is also required to report the suspected abuse to the authorities.
- ◆ Listen when a child is telling you about an event to determine if it appears to be child abuse or neglect, but do not attempt to investigate further. Immediately report the child's account to the authorities and let trained professionals determine if a crime has occurred or if a child-welfare intervention is needed.

## **What Happens if a Mandated Reporter Doesn't Report?**

Under D.C. law, mandated reporters who fail to report can be prosecuted by the Office of the Attorney General. Penalties include a fine up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 180 days, or both.

## **What Happens if I Do Not Report Child Sex Abuse?**

Under D.C. law, failure to report that a child under the age of 16 may be a victim of sexual abuse could result in a \$300 fine.

## **What if I'm Unsure if I Am Required to Report or Concerned About Confidentiality?**

If you are unsure if you must report, do not delay and report immediately.

Learn more about mandated reporting at: <https://dc.mandatedreporter.org/>



Connect with the Office of the Attorney General

441 4th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001

Phone: (202) 727-3400 Fax: (202) 347-8922 TTY: (202) 727-3400

Email: [dc.oag@dc.gov](mailto:dc.oag@dc.gov)

CONSUMER HOTLINE — (202) 442-9828

STAY CONNECTED:



[www.oag.dc.gov](http://www.oag.dc.gov)