



**Vol. 1, Issue 6**  
**July 2017**

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## **What Are Mandated Reporters Responsibilities?**

**Information Provided By: Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers**

Florida law requires that any person in Florida who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible for the child's welfare must immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline of the Department of Children and Families. The penalty for failing to report is a felony of the third degree. There are also financial penalties for failing to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

If you know or suspect that a child under the age of 18 is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, you are required to report that to the Florida Abuse Hotline (1-800-962-2873).

Mandated reporters are required to make a report of suspected abuse when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- They have contact with the child as part of work or through a regularly scheduled program activity or service OR
- They are responsible for the child or work for an agency that is directly responsible for the child OR
- Someone makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter and the child is identifiable. This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position OR
- A person 14 years old or older makes a disclosure that he/she has committed child abuse. This includes children that the mandated reporter may not know through their work or volunteer position.
- The child does not have to come before the mandated reporter in order for the mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse.

Mandated reporters must not try to determine whether abuse has happened. They are not investigators and should not ask questions about what happened, who did it, and so forth beyond reaching the threshold of reasonable cause to suspect that the child has been abused.



# GulfCoast

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER  
*Protecting Children, Strengthening Families*

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## Signs of Child Abuse

1. **Unexplained Injuries** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.
2. **Changes in behavior** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
3. **Returning to earlier behaviors** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
4. **Fear of going home** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.
5. **Changes in eating** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or loss.
6. **Changes in sleeping** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
7. **Changes in school performance and attendance** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the child's injuries from authorities.
8. **Lack of personal care or hygiene** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
9. **Risk-taking behaviors** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
10. **Inappropriate sexual behaviors** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

**If you suspect or have concerns that a child is being abused and/or neglected, you must report it immediately!**

**Florida Abuse Hotline (1-800-962-2873)**



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**It's almost back to school time! If you would like to donate items for children in need, please drop them off at the CAC. Basic items such as notebook paper, pencils, crayons, erasers are needed.**



**Gulf Coast Children's  
 Advocacy Center**

210 E. 11th Street, Panama City, FL 32401  
 (850) 872-7760  
[www.gulfcoastcac.org](http://www.gulfcoastcac.org)  
[www.facebook.com/GulfCoastCAC](https://www.facebook.com/GulfCoastCAC)

**You can support the GCCAC with an online  
 donation at [gulfcoastcac.org](http://gulfcoastcac.org)!**

**Would you like to tour the CAC to see our beautiful, child-friendly "Under the Sea" theme office and learn more about our efforts to end child abuse? Email Whitney at [whitneysewell@gulfcoastcac.org](mailto:whitneysewell@gulfcoastcac.org) to set up your tour today!**

