



Reporting Procedures

for the safety and protection of the children at

Clemson Presbyterian Church

Revised 2017

Reporting in South Carolina

South Carolina law requires certain persons to report suspected child abuse or neglect, when, in the person's professional capacity, the person has received information which leads to the reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. The following professionals are mandated reporters under South Carolina law: physicians, nurses, dentists, optometrists, medical examiners, coroners, employees of county medical examiner's or coroner's offices, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professionals, **members of the clergy** including Christian Science Practitioners or religious healers, school teachers, counselors, principals, assistant principals, social or public assistance workers, substance abuse treatment staff, childcare workers in childcare centers or foster care facilities, police or law enforcement officers, undertakers, funeral home directors, funeral home employees, persons responsible for processing film, computer technicians, and judges.

Guidelines for Mandated Reporters

When confronted with the possibility that a child has been or may be abused or neglected, there are several steps that should be taken to protect the child. The following are suggested guidelines to further assist mandated reporters in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.

Responding to a Child

- Listen attentively while the child is talking to you.
- Do not probe for details, particularly when it concerns sexual abuse. (Proving sexual abuse in court often depends heavily on the child's statement. Discussing details of the abuse with the child is essentially handling evidence, and should only be done by trained investigators).
- Do not remove clothing to examine the child's body.
- Do not indicate doubt or disbelief.
- Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator. Children often love the person who mistreats them.
- Tell the child what you will do, for example that you are going to contact DSS and a caseworker will come to talk with the child.
- Do not give the child false assurances, or promise that you will keep the information confidential.

Documentation

- Document the basis of your concerns, including physical and behavioral signs.
- Document the child's statements to you. Try to use the child's exact words.
- Document the child's demeanor while talking with you. Note any signs of fear or distress.
- If you make the report orally, record the date, time, and the person and agency you contacted. If you make the report in writing, keep a copy of the correspondence.
- Be aware that your records concerning the report may be subject to subpoena.

Making a Report

- Make the report as soon as possible after receiving the information which causes you to suspect abuse or neglect. Mandatory reporters cannot "cause" a report to be made by delegating this responsibility to someone else. You must personally make the report.
- You do not need to have conclusive proof. The law requires you to report when you have "reason to believe" a child is being or may be abused or neglected.
- Do not attempt to investigate or excessively question the child. Specially trained DSS caseworkers and law enforcement officers will investigate the allegations.
- Collect as much of the following information as possible to convey to the investigating agency: child's name, age, date of birth, and address; child's present location; names and ages of siblings, parents' names and addresses.
- Explain why you are concerned about the child.
- At the time of the report, or as soon as possible thereafter, provide copies of all photographs, negatives, and medical reports to the appropriate investigating agency.
- Although reports can be made anonymously, it is often helpful to provide your name and address in the event that further information is needed.
- At the time the report is made, you can request to be notified of the outcome of the investigation.
- After you have made a report, if you learn new information or if you learn additional information, report it to DSS or law enforcement.

Contact with Parents

- In the event that a child makes a disclosure about a parent or you have reason to suspect abuse in the home, do not confront the parent before making a report to DSS or Law Enforcement. Informing parents before the appropriate intervention can be made may lead to retribution against the child or destruction of evidence.

Follow-Up

- Your continued help may be necessary. Be willing to meet with multidisciplinary teams and/or testify in court if requested.

Mandatory Reporting in South Carolina

SECTION 63-7-310. Persons required to report.

(A) A physician, nurse, dentist, optometrist, medical examiner, or coroner, or an employee of a county medical examiner's or coroner's office, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professional, **member of the clergy** including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer, school teacher, **counselor**, principal, assistant principal, social or public assistance worker, substance abuse treatment staff, or childcare worker in a childcare center or foster care facility, police or law enforcement officer, undertaker, funeral home director or employee of a funeral home, persons responsible for processing films, computer technician, or a judge must report in accordance with this section when in the person's professional capacity the person has received information which gives the person reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected as defined in Section 63-7-20.

(B) If a person required to report pursuant to subsection (A) has received information in the person's professional capacity which gives the person reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but the reporter believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the reporter must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

(C) Except as provided in subsection (A), **any person** who has reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse and neglect **may report** in accordance with this section.

(D) Reports of child abuse or neglect may be made orally by telephone or otherwise to the county department of social services or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found.