

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Family, Guest and Volunteer Services



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Duty to Report

Who must report abuse?

Everyone is a mandatory reporter under Tennessee Law. If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, you have the responsibility to file a report with the appropriate agency for protective intervention.

The duty to report is triggered when abuse or neglect is suspected. The abuse or neglect does not need to be proven or known.

It is mandatory to immediately report:

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Medical or general neglect
- Exploitation

When to Report

POLICY: 20.11.001-PROTECTIVE INTERVENTION

Neglect

Failure or refusal to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, education (as required by law), medical treatment, supervision and other supports necessary for the child's well-being based on the age and developmental stages of a child.

Physical Abuse

A child or vulnerable adult who has a wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition caused or worsened by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

Examples:

- Any non-accidental physical injury or trauma that could cause injury – goes beyond corporal punishment (e.g., bruise, broken bone, burn, striking in a way that would cause internal injury, etc.)
- A caregiver's failure to protect a child from another person who is physically abusive
- Violent behavior by a caregiver that demonstrates a disregard for a child and could result in serious injury.

Sexual Abuse

A child or vulnerable adult has signs of sexual trauma and/or tells you they have suffered sexual trauma.

Examples:

- Intentionally exposing a child to sexually explicit material.
- Taking pictures or videos of children engaging in sexual activities or in sexually explicit poses.
- Making children available to others for sexual purposes
- Caregiver with knowledge or reason to suspect child sexual abuse by another person who does not intervene or protect the child.

How to Report

- Contact a nurse, your volunteer supervisor or a social worker to report suspected abuse and/or neglect.
- There is an on-call social worker available 24/7. Social work staff is available to provide support and assistance in the reporting process. **To reach a social worker, call (901) 595-3300 and ask the hospital operator to have the on-call social worker paged.** Even if a patient doesn't have an assigned social worker, there are social work staff who can help.
- In Tennessee, the Department of Health's Department of Children Services (DCS) will keep the identity of the reporter confidential so that the report can be 'anonymous'.