

Child Abuse and Neglect

Physicians and other licensed healthcare staff are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse. A report is required when in your professional capacity or within the scope of your employment you obtain knowledge of or observe a child whom you reasonably suspect has been the victim of child abuse.

There are four general types of abuse:

PHYSICAL ABUSE includes fractures, lacerations, bruises, burns and other injuries that cannot be explained, or for which the explanations offered are improbable given the extent of the injury

SEXUAL ABUSE may cause bruising or tears around the genital area or rectum, abdominal pain or pain with urination or defecation, or evidence of sexually transmitted infection. Sexual abuse includes sex acts with children even if force isn't used as well as sexual exploitation including child pornography and child prostitution.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE and WILLFUL CRUELTY involve situations in which any person willfully causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon, unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering or willfully causes the child's person or health to be endangered.

NEGLECT is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, where no physical injury has occurred.

How do I report abuse of a child by someone besides the family or guardian?

If abuse occurs in another setting, it is treated under regular criminal statutes and should be reported to the police. If you are concerned that the parent or guardian did not act appropriately to protect the child, call the Child Abuse Hotline to determine if it should be reported there as well.

What about possible child abuse encountered outside of my medical role?

In this case, you are encouraged but not mandated to make a report by calling the Child Abuse Hotline. If you are in a situation outside of your medical care role, you are not required to give your name.

What happens after a report is made?

Child Protective Services staff will evaluate the situation and determine if the child should be removed from the home pending further evaluation, if referrals or services should be provided, or if no action is needed. In some cases they may refer a case for prosecution. You can request follow-up on disposition of the case.

Report Immediately by Phone:

**Child Abuse Hotline
(650) 595-7922**

Call 911 if the child is in immediate danger.

File a written report within 36 hours: Send the Suspected Child Abuse Form, SS 8572 (see next page), to Child Protective Services or the police jurisdiction where the abuse is alleged to have occurred. A list of police jurisdictions with addresses, phone, and fax numbers is on page included after the reporting form.

If you have any questions about whether a situation should be reported, call the San Mateo County Child Abuse Hotline at (650) 595-7922.

➤ **The Suspected Child Abuse Form and Instructions are on the next two pages.**

Can I be sued for reporting?

No mandated reporter who reports a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect shall be held civilly or criminally liable for any report required or authorized by CANRA (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act).