



DEKALB COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #428

Serving The Cortland, DeKalb, and Malta Communities

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Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

It is important for every person to take child abuse and neglect seriously, to be able to recognize when it happens, and to know what to do next. Care enough to call.

DeKalb Child Abuse Hotline

1-815-756-3401 (DeKalb)

1-815-756-8033 (TTY)

217-524-2606 (outside Illinois)

State Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-25-ABUSE (Illinois)

1-800-358-5117 (TTY)

217-524-2606 (outside Illinois)

DISTRICT PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING

All district staff are mandated reporters. If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, you are required to make a report to DCFS or cause a report to occur. Simply reporting suspicions to a superior or a member of your school's Student Services Team does not satisfy the legal requirement.

- If a staff member suspects abuse or neglect of a child, that staff member must make a DCFS report. Reports can be made by phone or by fax. The report must be made as soon as possible, with written confirmation following the report within 48 hours. (Details about the information that will be needed are provided here on the reverse side.)
- Please keep in mind that district staff are not investigators, but are mandated reporters of suspected abuse or neglect. In general, the mandated reporter who hears a child's disclosure should not encourage the victim to disclose additional information beyond what is given voluntarily. Further questioning may result in traumatizing the victim still further. Reporters should concentrate on taking very careful notes about what the victim discloses voluntarily. Please make the report to DCFS and allow them to investigate further. It may be prudent to also refer the student to the School Social Worker or School Counselor.
- For support, guidance or assistance in knowing what to do or in making a report, you are encouraged to contact a member of your Student Services Team, such as the School Social Worker or Counselor.
- Staff members are also strongly encouraged, though not obligated, to confidentially communicate the need for a report with a member of the school administration, as it is likely that follow-up from DCFS may require support from someone in the office.

DISTRICT PROCEDURES FOR DCFS INTERVIEWS

- All DCFS workers requesting to speak with a student during the school day must present proof of identification and purpose to the building administrator or his/her designee.
- The administrator must make every effort to provide the DCFS worker with access to the child as soon as possible while minimizing impact to the instructional environment. A private and confidential room must also be provided wherein the worker and student can meet.
- The administrator, or his/her specifically identified designee, may be present during the interview if, in the administrator's opinion, his/her presence is warranted, unless the DCFS official presents paperwork to the contrary. The presence of the school administrator is NOT required, though. In either case, the administrator/ designee may not interfere with or interject in the interview process in any way and should sit out of sight of the child.

HOW SHOULD MANDATED REPORTERS MAKE REPORTS?

Call the child abuse hotline as soon as possible. Then, you must send written confirmation to the appropriate DCFS field office within 48 hours. The Department will provide a form to use when sending this confirmation. However, your School Social Workers or School Counselors also have copies of this form. If you suspect a child's death may have been caused by abuse or neglect, you must also call your county's coroner or medical examiner. A mandated reporter's failure to report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to DCFS constitutes a Class A misdemeanor; simply reporting suspicions to a superior or student services personnel does not satisfy legal requirements.

"School, Community, Family... a partnership for education"

WHAT ARE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or must put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest) or emotional. Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basics for a child.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE HOTLINE?

You should call the child abuse hotline whenever you believe that a person who is caring for the child, who lives with the child, or who works with or around children has caused injury or harm or put the child at risk of physical injury as defined in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Some examples include:

- If you see someone hitting a child with an object.
- If you see marks on a child's body that do not appear to have been caused by accident.
- If a child tells you that he or she has been harmed by someone.
- If a child appears to be undernourished, is dressed inappropriately for the weather, or is young and has been left alone.

These are a few situations when you should call the hotline. Use your own judgment and call the hotline whenever you think a child has been abused or neglected.

WHEN SHOULD I NOT CALL THE HOTLINE?

Some situations do not require calling the hotline. Use good judgment. Call only when you think a child has been or will be injured as described above. Some examples of when you should **not** call the hotline include:

- Situations where a child is causing a problem that concerns you, but the problem is not related to abuse or neglect. In some cases you may wish to call law enforcement or talk to the child's parents or relatives.
- Domestic situations where family stress is evident, but the child has not been abused or at risk of abuse. Community service agencies are often available to help.

WHAT SHOULD I REPORT?

Hotline staff are social workers with special training in determining what constitutes child abuse and neglect under Illinois law. Details are important. Ideally, you should be able to tell the Hotline worker:

- The child's name, address and age.
- The nature of the suspected abuse or neglect, including when and where it occurred.
- The names of suspected perpetrators and their relationship to the child (parent, teacher, etc.).
- Any other information you think may help.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CALL THE HOTLINE?

When you call, a hotline social worker will listen to what you wish to report. The worker will then ask questions to help gather enough information to determine whether to take a formal report. If there is not enough information to make a report, the worker will tell you so and answer any questions you may have. If a formal report is taken, a child protection investigator will begin the investigation within 24 hours, much sooner if the child is considered in immediate risk of harm. You will likely be requested to provide a phone number to them for follow-up. The school office, School Social Worker or School Counselor number may be given, if you prefer, and if you apprise those individuals of the report.

HOW AM I PROTECTED?

People who report alleged child abuse or neglect in good faith cannot be held liable for damages under criminal or civil law. In addition, their names are not given to the person they name as the abuser or to anyone else unless ordered by a hearing officer or judge. Members of the general public may make reports without giving their names.

SHOULD I CALL THE POLICE?

Always call the child abuse hotline. However, you should also consider calling the police -- especially in emergencies or when the child has been injured.

FOR MANDATED REPORTERS ONLY: WHO ARE MANDATED REPORTERS?

Members of the general public may report suspected child abuse and neglect if they choose. However, state law mandates that workers in certain professions must make reports if they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters include: School and Child Care Personnel, Medical Personnel, State Agencies, and Others (ie. social workers, social service administrators, foster parents, homemakers, recreational program or facility personnel, registered psychologists, etc.).

Mandated reporters who make good faith reports have the same immunity from liability under the law as non-mandated reporters. However, a mandated reporter's failure to report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to DCFS constitutes a Class A misdemeanor; simply reporting suspicions to a superior does not satisfy legal requirements.