

## Mandatory Reporting Requirements for Child Abuse and Neglect

All **University of Wisconsin-Extension employees** and **volunteers** working with UW-Extension programs must immediately report child abuse or neglect if, in the course of employment or voluntary service for UW-Extension, the employee or volunteer:

- observes an incident or threat of child abuse or neglect
- learns of an incident or threat of child abuse or neglect
- has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur

UW-Extension employees who are mandatory reporters under Wis. Stat. §48.981(2)(a) must continue to comply with the requirements of the state mandatory reporter law.

Any person making a report of child abuse or neglect in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability that results from the report.

Reporting suspected abuse or neglect may be difficult. It is, however, crucial to a child not only today, but also in the future. Parents, caregivers or maltreaters who have abused or neglected their children may need services and support to provide safe care of their children. The sooner a concern is reported, the sooner the child can be helped.

## Definitions and Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

**Who:** For purposes of reporting child abuse and neglect, a “child” is a person who is less than 18 years of age.

**What:** All suspected abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or the manufacture of methamphetamine) or the neglect of a person under 18 years of age must be reported to local law enforcement or a county social services agency.

### Physical abuse

Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes, but is not limited to, lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm.

### Signs

- Afraid to go home
- Frightened of parents/caretakers
- Fearful of other adults
- Extremes in behavior, very aggressive, withdrawn and shy
- Bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, back, buttocks
- Injuries in the shape of an object (cord, belt)
- Fractures that do not fit the story of how an injury occurred
- Delay in seeking medical help
- Unexplained burns

## Sexual abuse

Sexual intercourse or sexual touching of a child, recording or displaying a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct, sexual exploitation, exposing of genitalia, forced viewing or listening to sexual activity, or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.

### Signs

- Poor peer relationships
- Refusal to participate in physical activity
- Drastic change in behavior
- Regressive or childlike behavior that is not age appropriate
- Overly sexualized behavior
- Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination pain
- Stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain, swelling, itching in genital area

## Abuse as manufacturing of methamphetamine

It is child abuse to manufacture methamphetamines with a child present, or in a child's home or under any other circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that the manufacture would be seen, heard or smelled by a child.

## Emotional abuse

Emotional damage occurs when a child's parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to address the symptoms.

Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning that is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or aggression. Emotional damage may be demonstrated by substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or learning which are incompatible with the child's age or stage of development.

### Signs

- Low self-esteem
- Self-denigration
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Severe depression or anxiety

**If you suspect something, say something.**

## Neglect

When a parent or a caregiver fails, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty to provide the necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care, or shelter, which seriously endangers the physical health of the child.

### Signs

- Poor hygiene, odor
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather
- Needs medical or dental care
- Left alone, unsupervised for long periods
- Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Constant hunger, begs or steals food
- Extreme willingness to please
- Frequent absence from school
- Arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

### How to report

Immediately contact:

- The county child protective services department, sheriff or local police department where the child resides by phone or in person. Reports may *not* be made by email.
- **If there is an emergency or a child is in urgent danger, call 911.**

After reporting to local authorities, contact:

- University of Wisconsin-Extension Human Resources, 608-262-9475

### What to report to local authorities

Explain as well as you can what happened or is happening to the child. Describe the nature of the abuse or neglect. Include information that has been disclosed by the child and/or observed by you. Be as specific as possible. Be prepared to give the name, address and phone number of the child and the name of the parent(s) or caregiver. Even if you do not know all of this information, report what you do know.

### What to report to UW-Extension Human Resources

After reporting to local authorities, you (both employees and volunteers) should contact UW-Extension Human Resources and indicate who made the report, on what date, and to which agency.

If the incident or threat of child abuse or neglect involves an allegation against a university employee or volunteer, or the suspected abuse or neglect occurred during a UW-Extension sponsored activity, UW-Extension Human Resources should also be notified of these details.

### What happens after you report

Child protective services and law enforcement will conduct the investigation and follow up if deemed appropriate. With exceptions, the identity of the person making the report will be kept confidential.

### Questions

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## Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

### Important contacts

- **Emergency 911**

### After Reporting Child Abuse to Local Authorities

- University of Wisconsin-Extension Human Resources, 608-262-9475

### More information

[www.uwex.edu/human-resources/childabuse](http://www.uwex.edu/human-resources/childabuse)

[www.uwsa.edu/gc-off/child-safety/index.htm](http://www.uwsa.edu/gc-off/child-safety/index.htm)

As AA/EEO employers, UW Colleges and UW-Extension provide equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.

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# Fulfilling Your Obligations as a Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect

**UW**  
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