

# Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, Maltreatment or Neglect

Delaware law mandates any person, agency, organization or entity to make an immediate oral report to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Division of Family Services, when they know of, or suspect, child abuse or neglect under Chapter 9 of Title 16 of the Delaware Code and to follow up with any requested written reports (**16 Del. C. §903**).

To report child abuse or neglect, call the **24-hour hotline** at **(800) 292-9582**.

The Department will notify the Division of Professional Regulation of child abuse allegations.  
Reasonable Cause

A person can have "reasonable cause" to suspect that a child is abused or maltreated if, considering what physical evidence he/she observed or is told about, and from his/her own training and experience, it is **POSSIBLE that** the injury or condition was caused by neglect or by non-accidental means. The reporter need not be absolutely certain that the injury or condition was caused by neglect or by non-accidental means. The reporter should only be able to entertain the **POSSIBILITY** that it could have been neglect or non-accidental in order to possess the necessary "reasonable cause". Certainty is not required.

NOTE: The lack of complete information does not prohibit a person from reporting.

## **Reporting Hotlines**

- Delaware Child Abuse Hotline (24 hours a day) 1-800-292-9582
- Delaware Child Abuse Hotline (Kent County) 1-302-739-4800
- Delaware Child Abuse Hotline (Sussex County) 1-302-856-5450
- Delaware Child Abuse Hotline (out-of-state) 1-302-577-2163
- Delaware Domestic Violence Hotline (English) 1-302-422-8058

## **Written Reports**

### WHEN

- Immediately, by telephone, at any time of day, seven days a week
- Additionally, a BGCDE incident report must be filed within 48 hours, and a State of DE Child Abuse/Neglect Mandatory Reporting Form sent within 72 hours.
- Within 24 hours, report must be submitted to BGCA through the appropriate website portal.

### TO WHOM

- Delaware Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-292-9582
- Within 72 hours after the oral report, send a completed Child Abuse/Neglect Mandatory Reporting form to the regional office of the county of the child(ren)'s residence. Type or print the information and sign the form on the back.

Regional Offices:

<b>New Castle County</b>	<b>Kent County</b>	<b>Sussex County</b>
Division of Family Services Children's Service Center 62 Rockford Road Wilmington, DE 19806 <b>1.800.292.9582</b>	Division of Family Services James Williams Service Center 605 River Road Dover, DE 19901 <b>1.302.739.4800</b>	Division of Family Services Georgetown State Service Ctr 546 South Bedford Street Georgetown, DE 19947 <b>1.302.856.5450</b>

Reporters should maintain careful notes for their own personal records, noting such things as dates, times, places, involved in any reporting incident, etc.

What to include in the telephone report:

- Names and addresses of the child and his/her parents or other person responsible for his/her care and directions to their home;
- The child's age (date of birth if possible) and gender;
- Description of the suspected abuse or neglect;
- Current condition of the child;
- Any other pertinent information which may assist the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) in determining abuse or neglect.
- When making the report, you will not have to identify yourself, nor explain where you may be reached.

What to remember involving the written report:

- Use Division of Family Services Child Abuse/Neglect Mandatory Reporting Form (see Appendix for sample).
- Include identical information as in the telephone report.
- Information should be written as clearly and objectively as possible.

NOTE: Written reports are admissible as evidence in any judicial proceedings; accuracy and completeness are vital.

The mandated reporter laws have been updated to include increased fines for failing to report suspected child abuse. Federal and state laws protect reporters from liability. Review the update on the Office of Child Care Licensing website:

(Rule # 145) <http://kids.delaware.gov/fs/fsiseethesigns.shtml>

Allegations of sexual abuse are handled by the Institutional Abuse Unit and law enforcement. The children involved will be interviewed at the local Child Advocacy Center by a forensic social worker or psychologist.

CEO or Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with VPHR, will determine status or conditions of employment for employees involved in allegations of child abuse.