



**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT**

# Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Policy

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# I. Statement of Policy & Overview

## **ALL CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT EMPLOYEES ARE MANDATED REPORTERS AS IT RELATES TO CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT.**

All Chicago Park District employees must take child abuse and neglect seriously and are required by Illinois law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”). 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 an employee’s legal obligations as a Mandated Reporter under Illinois’ Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

Mandated reporters who report alleged child abuse and neglect to DCFS in good faith cannot be held liable for damages under criminal or civil law. In addition, their names cannot be given to the person they name as the perpetrator or to anyone else unless ordered by a hearing officer or judge.

## II. What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in the child's home, or someone who works with or around children. Mistreatment causes injury or puts a child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns, broken bones, or marks on the body that do not appear to have been caused by an accident), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional.

Neglect occurs when a parent or caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, or for other basic needs for a child. If a child appears to be undernourished, is dressed inappropriately for the weather, or is young and has been left alone, you should report this as child abuse.

## III. Reporting Child Abuse

- 1. Telephone 1-800-25-ABUSE.** As soon as you have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, telephone 1-800-25-ABUSE.<sup>1</sup> This is DCFS’s Child Abuse Hotline (“Hotline”). Park District employees should not conduct their own investigation by interviewing suspected victims, witnesses or any other involved party.

When you call, a trained Hotline intake worker will listen to your report, ask questions, and determine whether to take a formal report.

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<sup>1</sup> DCFS also provides for online reporting for non-life threatening and non-emergency incidents at <https://dcfsonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov/Reporting/ReportingMain>. If you believe the abuse or neglect you are reporting requires immediate action, including if the involved adult has or will have access to a child within the next 24 hours, you must call the Hotline.

When calling the Hotline, employees should obtain the DCFS worker's name and the intake number assigned to the matter. Any questions about reporting to DCFS should be directed to the Office of Prevention and Accountability ("OPA") at [OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com](mailto:OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com) or 312-742-5OPA (312-742-5672).

## **2. Have the following information available when you call:**

- 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
- Any additional information you think may help

Even if this information is not readily available, the reporter should not delay in calling the Hotline.

**Notify OPA and Your Supervisor or Department or Unit Head.** Immediately after a report is made to DCFS, all Park District employees should notify OPA by emailing [OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com](mailto:OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com) or by calling 312-742-5OPA (312-742-5672). Employees should also notify their supervisor after a DCFS report has been made, unless the alleged abuser is the employee's supervisor. In that case, the employee should report to OPA to receive further direction.

## **3. Who are mandated reporters?**

All Chicago Park District employees are mandated reporters. Illinois law mandates that workers in certain professions must make reports if they have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect. 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 supervisor does not satisfy legal requirements.

## **4. When should I call the Hotline?**

You should call the Hotline as soon as possible whenever you believe that a person who is caring for a child, who lives with a child, or who works with or around children has caused injury or harm or has put the child at risk of physical injury. 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 they have 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.

If you are concerned that a situation may involve abuse or neglect but are uncertain, please call the Hotline. The Hotline intake worker will ask questions to help determine if the situation does qualify as a DCFS matter.