

# A Texas School Employee's Guide to Reporting Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect

## Rights & Responsibilities of School Employees:

- As a professional reporter, you are required by law to report suspected abuse within 48 hours of first suspecting that a child has been or may be abused or neglected (Texas Family Code § 261.101(b)).
- You have the right and responsibility to report suspected child abuse or neglect free of fear of retaliation (Texas Family Code § 261.110).
- Your report of child abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in good faith and without malice (Texas Family Code § 261.106).
- Teachers and school employees making reports of suspected abuse or neglect are not required by law to first report the suspicion to a peer, colleague, or supervisor.
- Teachers and school employees may not delegate the duty to report suspected abuse or neglect to any other person (Texas Family Code § 261.101(b)).

## Responding to an Outcry & Making a Report: What to Expect

- When responding to an outcry, let the child use his or her own words to tell you what happened, but leave the detailed questioning to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and law enforcement. This is critical to ensuring the integrity of any investigation and minimizing additional trauma to the child.
- When making a report, be prepared to provide basic information about the child, such as their name, date of birth, and address, as well as the names of their caregivers, siblings, and other household members if possible. Answer all questions as thoroughly as possible and provide detailed and descriptive information about the situation you are reporting so that hotline staff can accurately assess the need for investigation.
- If you request that your identity be kept confidential, DFPS may not reveal your identity to the child's parents, to alleged perpetrators, or to others without your consent or a court order. However, DFPS may disclose your identity to the district attorney or to law enforcement if the case requires further investigation.

## How to Respond If a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect

### DO:

- Remain calm.
- Believe the child.
- Allow the child to talk.
- Show interest and concern.
- Reassure and support the child's feelings.
- Take action. It could save a child's life.

### DON'T:

- Panic or overreact.
- Press the child to talk.
- Promise anything you can't control.
- Confront the offender.
- Blame the child or minimize their feelings.
- Overwhelm the child with questions.



## Guidance for Campus Leadership:

- DFPS or law enforcement may visit your campus during the course of an investigation. Avoid the use of public media (e.g., intercoms) to notify the appropriate staff or students.
- Establish a known, private location on your campus where both reporters and students can confidentially meet with DFPS or law enforcement.
- Take steps to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the report by not discussing the report or reporter. You are not required to disclose knowledge of a report to a parent or caregiver. If asked, you may choose to deny any knowledge of the report.
- Avoid implementing policies that require faculty and staff to consult with administration or other staff before they make a report of child abuse or neglect. Leave the detailed questioning and investigation to DFPS and law enforcement.

***This resource was created by Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas.  
Contact your local children's advocacy center (CAC) to learn more about the signs of abuse.***

**Remember, you are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse.**

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, call 911.  
For all other cases in Texas,  
call the abuse and neglect hotline at 1.800.252.5400.



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[www.cactx.org](http://www.cactx.org)