

WHAT MUST I REPORT?

Both oral and written reports should include the name of the child, his whereabouts, the names and addresses of the parents or guardian and a description of the child's condition.

DON'T DELAY REPORTING IF YOU DON'T HAVE ALL OF THIS INFORMATION, AS IT CAN BE OBTAINED LATER.

HOW AM I PROTECTED?

All persons reporting suspected abuse or neglect (whether required by law to report or not) are by law, immune from legal action, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be taken. Thus, you have protection in the event a parent or someone else should seek to initiate action against you.

WILL I HAVE TO TESTIFY IN COURT?

That depends on the nature and severity of the case, whether court action is initiated to remove the child from the home, and whether the alleged party is prosecuted on a criminal charge.

THE LAW IS SPECIFIC: "the doctrine of privileged communication shall not be a ground for excluding any evidence regarding a child's injuries or the cause thereof."

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHILD?

Generally, Alabama law requires the Department of Human Resources "to seek out, through investigation, complaints from citizens, or other-wise, the minor children.....in need of its care and protection and.....aid such children to a fair opportunity in life."

The department works closely with the child and the parents or caretaker through direct counseling or referral to appropriate helping professionals or agencies. The purpose of providing these services is to keep the family unit together, if possible.

If removal of the child from his home is necessary, the department will petition the court for custody and make plans for substitute care of the child.

The department will continue to work with the child and seek to work with the parents to prepare them for the time when the child may be returned to their home or receive continued care elsewhere.



ABUSED CHILDREN
NEED PROTECTION.



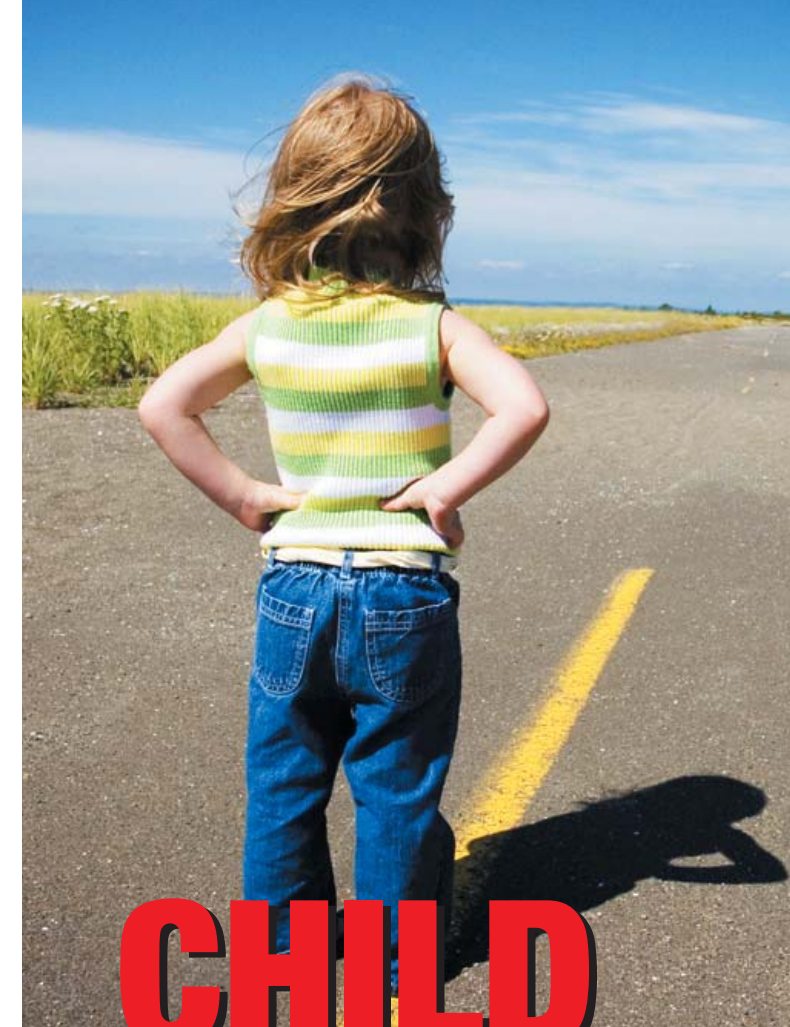
CHILD ABUSE IS A
COMMUNITY PROBLEM.

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All programs of the Department of Human Resources are administered in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and all other federal and state civil rights laws.

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**CHILD
ABUSE
HURTS!**

**REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
to your County
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**



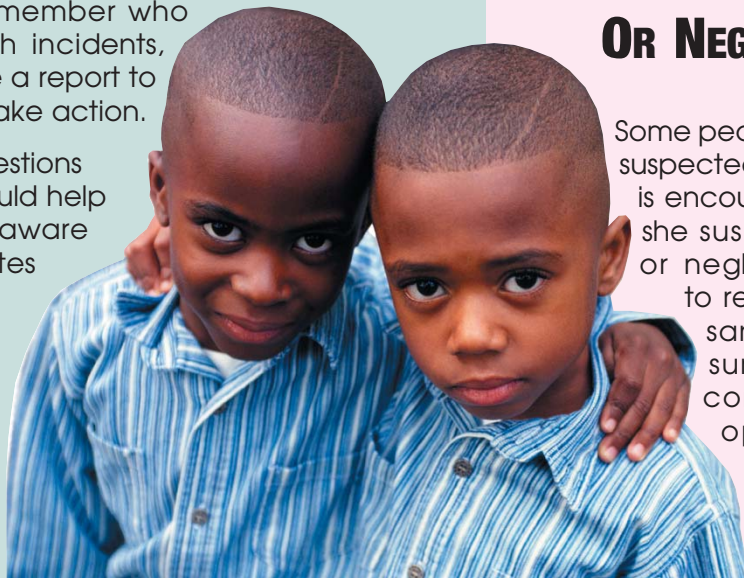
CHILD ABUSE HURTS: Report it Promptly

The number of children reported as abused or neglected has increased in Alabama. Your help is needed to ensure that these children receive adequate protection and services.

This pamphlet is designed to inform you of your responsibilities as a public-spirited citizen to report suspected instances of abuse or neglect, and to assure you of full protection from legal action by the person you report.

Alabama law is clear on reporting abuse and neglect of children under the age of 18. If you are someone who comes in regular contact with children—a physician, a teacher, social worker, nurse, or day care worker, for example—you should be aware of your legal obligation to report incidents of suspected or obvious child abuse or neglect. If you are a concerned citizen, neighbor, friend or family member who is aware of such incidents, you should make a report to those who can take action.

The following questions and answers should help you to become aware of what constitutes child abuse or neglect, and what you should do about situations you encounter.



WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Under Alabama law, it is "harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare which can occur through nonaccidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse; sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation."

WHAT IS CHILD NEGLECT?

Under Alabama law, it is "negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, clothing, or shelter; provided, however, that a parent or guardian legitimately practicing his religious beliefs who thereby does not provide specified medical treatment for a child, for that reason alone shall not be considered a negligent parent or guardian; however, such an exception shall not preclude a court from ordering that medical services be provided to the child, where his health requires it."

MUST I REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT?

Some people are required, by law, to report suspected abuse or neglect, but anyone is encouraged to make a report if he or she suspects a child is being abused or neglected. Those required, by law to report include all hospitals, clinics, sanitariums, doctors, physicians, surgeons, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, physical therapists, nurses, public and private K-12 employees, school teachers and

officials, peace officers, law enforcement officials, pharmacists, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, employees of public and private institutions of postsecondary and higher education, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence (except for information gained solely in a confidential communication) which includes "any duly ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister, pastor, priest, rabbi, or practitioner of any bona fide established church or religious organization," or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child when such child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect.

Mandated reporters shall be required to report, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report (submit DHR-FCS-1593, Written Report OF Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect) to a duly constituted authority (e.g., primarily DHR and law enforcement).

HOW CAN I BE CERTAIN THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?

Certainty is not required. In most instances, the only way you could be absolutely certain that a child had been abused or neglected would be if the parent or other person admitted it. All that is required is a reasonable suspicion that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. After investigating the report, the department determines whether abuse and/or neglect occurred.

TO WHOM MUST I REPORT?

You should make your report to your chief of police or sheriff or to the Department of Human Resources. When a report is made to a law enforcement official, he must inform the department so that protective services to the child or children involved may be provided.

WHEN MUST I REPORT?

If you are among those persons required to report child abuse and neglect and you learn of a child whose condition or injuries are not reasonably explainable as accidental, or if you are called on to treat such injuries, you must report immediately by telephone or in person. The law also requires you to follow your oral report with a written one. The Department of Human Resources has a form for your written report.



CHILD ABUSE CAN OCCUR IN WEALTHY, MIDDLE-CLASS AND LOW-INCOME HOMES.