

How do I Report Suspected Abuse?

If you suspect abuse or neglect, here are the steps you should follow to make a report:

1. Immediately contact the Office of Children's Services (OCS) that is responsible for your area, and report the suspected abuse or neglect. The regional OCS office for Sitka reports is located in Juneau; contact them at 1-888-622-1650.
2. If you are unable to reach OCS, you must contact the law enforcement agency responsible for your area. If you live in an urban area with municipal police department, the responsible agency would be the municipal police department. If you live in an area covered by only by Troopers, they would be the responsible agency. If you live in a village with VPSOs and VPOs, you should contact both the local law enforcement (VPSO and VPOs) and the Troopers covering your village.
3. In an emergency situation where the child is facing an immediate danger, you should call 911, and take whatever actions you can without putting yourself at risk of harm to make the child safe until authorities take over.
4. OCS or the law enforcement agency you contact will take information from you about the suspected abuse or neglect.
5. Please keep in mind:
 - The information regarding suspected abuse or neglect is considered confidential information, and should only be disclosed to those who are entitled to know the information in accordance with your organization's own internal policies.
 - State law (AS 47.17.020 (g)) provides that a person who makes the report to the their supervisor or another person working for their organization is not relieved of the obligation to make the report to the OCS or law enforcement.
6. OCS/law enforcement will make an initial investigation of the report. If they conclude that the report is not substantiated, they may not take any further action. If, however, the report is substantiated, a state Child in Need of Aid case may be initiated in state court. If the situation involves abuse or neglect that are criminal violations, a state criminal prosecution may be initiated. In either situation, the agencies involved may need to interview you further, and you may be required to testify.
7. Document the abuse or neglect. In general, you should keep a written record of what happened for you to refer to if you are required to testify, as your testimony may not occur until long after your initial report.

What information will OCS/law enforcement need from me when I contact them to report abuse or neglect?

When you call to report a suspected case of child abuse or neglect, the OCS worker will want to know all of the information listed below. Please be prepared to give as much information as possible to OCS.

Name, age, date of birth, gender, ethnic heritage/race and current address of the child

Where the child is at the time of report

Names, addresses and phone numbers of parents and siblings (if the street address is not known or there is no house number, provide a description of the house and where it is located)

Names, addresses and phone numbers of other significant relatives (if the street address is not known or there is no house number, provide a description of the house and where it is located)

If the child has Alaska Native or American Indian heritage, their tribal affiliation

What type of abuse has happened, how often it is happening and how serious it is

What happened that made you decide to report now? Was there an incident or situation that led to the report?

Current condition of the child

Names, addresses and phone number of person(s) suspected of doing the abuse

Any action taken by reporter (or others)

The name, address and phone number of the person making this report.

OCS accepts anonymous reports

Whether the reporter witnessed the abuse or neglect, the dates of occurrence

The names, addresses (if the street address is not known or there is no house number, provide a description of the house and where it is located) and phone numbers of others who have knowledge of the incident or situation

Whether you have a concern for the immediate safety of this child or other children in the home

Whether the reporter told the family of plans to file this report

What Mandatory Reporters Should NOT Do

Here is a list of some things mandatory reporters and anyone reporting neglect or abuse should not do:

- Do not investigate the situation yourself
- Do not question the child about the abuse
- Do not paraphrase or change the child's statements - use exactly the words the child has said
- Do not bargain with the child
- Do not report only to your supervisor (that does not relieve you of your reporting duties)
- Do not notify the parent that you are reporting to OCS
- Do not make the report in a public place where others can overhear you
- Do not talk about this in the community
- If a child discloses to you or gives you information, do not promise to keep it secret