

If you don't stop this... who will?

What is Child Abuse?

Florida Statute 39.01 describes specific situations relevant to physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse or neglect.

The Child Abuse Source Book for Florida School Personnel lists indicators that although not diagnostic of abuse, have been reported in abused or neglected children.

- **Physical indicators** such as unexplained bruises, burns, or fractures, difficulty in walking or sitting, malnutrition, or dirty, bloody, inappropriate clothing.
- **Behavioral indicators** such as aggression, withdrawal, role reversal, wariness of adults, or writing about abuse.
- **Environmental indicators** such as ongoing inadequate supervision at home, hazardous housing, or exposure to domestic violence.

Resources for further information about recognizing and reporting child abuse:

Child Abuse Source Book for Florida School Personnel: A Prevention and Intervention Tool (2010). www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/chiabuse.pdf

Florida Statute 39.01 <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>
District School Board of Pasco County, Online Training

Florida Department of Children and Families, Training for Teachers, <http://www.myflfamilies.com>

Reference:

Child Abuse Source Book for Florida School Personnel: A Prevention and Intervention Tool (2010). Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, in Collaboration with Florida Department of Children and Family Services, Florida Department of Health, and select Florida School Districts. <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/chiabuse.pdf>

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Superintendent of Schools

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2013

CHILD ABUSE
DOES NOT
REPORT ITSELF

Make the Call • Help a Child



**Child Abuse Reporting Hotline
1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)**

Responsibilities
and protections
under Florida law



**DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
OF PASCO COUNTY**

Kurt S. Browning, Superintendent of Schools

CHILD ABUSE

Proof is not necessary, only a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect.

When You Suspect

- Report suspected abuse immediately or as soon as possible. Approval from school personnel is not required.
- If you are unsure, consult with another school professional or call the CPI Supervisor at (727) 841-4143. Do not delay making the report.
- Call the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96ABUSE. Give your name along with information about the child such as name, address, age, siblings' names and ages, nature and extent of alleged abuse or neglect, and identity of abuser, if known.
- DCF personnel determine if the call meets the statutory definition of child abuse or neglect. If it does, the report is accepted for child protective investigation by the sheriff's office in the county where the child lives.
- Under certain conditions, your call may be immediately transferred to the appropriate county's sheriff's office by the abuse hotline.
- Follow your school's procedure for notification of administration. Maintain confidentiality.
- Make notes for yourself about the report. Do not place notes in the student's file.

It's the Law

Florida statute (FS39.201) requires that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a person responsible for the child's welfare must report such knowledge or suspicion to the DCF child abuse hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE). Failure to report or preventing another person from reporting is a first-degree misdemeanor.

Legal Protections

Florida law protects reporters of child abuse.

- Anyone making a report in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability charges.
- Reporter is protected from retaliatory reprisals affecting the reporter's employment.
- Reporter's name is confidential. The name of a person who reports abuse will not be released to anyone other than employees of DCF, law enforcement or the state attorney without written consent of the person reporting.
- Disclosing confidential information from the abuse report is a second-degree misdemeanor punishable by law.

The Investigation

A Child Protective Investigator (CPI) from the appropriate county's sheriff's office conducts the initial investigation. The CPI may interview the child in school and may remove the child from the school.

During the investigation, school staff will:

- Cooperate with the CPI.
- If invited to participate in the CPI's interview of the child, provide support and comfort to the child and refrain from asking questions.
- NEVER notify parents or guardians that an investigation is underway, that the child is being interviewed, or that the child is being removed from school. The CPI will do the notification.
- NEVER tell anyone except your school administrator who made the report to DCF. Never admit to making a report. If someone pressures you to reveal or confirm the name of the reporter, you may find it helpful to say "Even if I know who made the report, I am required by law to keep it confidential."
- Respect the privacy of the child and family.

**For further information, contact:
The Office for Student Support Programs and Services (813) 794-2362**