



SAFE CHURCH INITIATIVE

Frequently Asked Questions About Reporting Child Abuse

The following are initial steps that churches should take in establishing a safe environment for children:

Who should report suspected abuse or neglect of a child?

Anyone, who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, neglected or is dependent.

What information does the intake worker need from the reporter?

The following basic information is requested:

- The child's name, sex and approximate age
- The name of the person believed to have been responsible for the abuse or neglect
- A description of the injury, neglect or threatened harm to the child
- The current location of the child; day care or school; home address
- Any immediate risk to the child OR a worker going out to ensure the child's safety (i.e., guns)
- The reporter's name and identifying information IF the caller wishes to give that information; anonymous reports are accepted and investigated.

Can I as a reporter be sued?

The person who reports suspected abuse or neglect is given civil and criminal immunity from prosecution as long as the he or she acted in good faith. The Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) only releases the name of the person who reports upon the order of a judge.

Can an investigative worker interview a child without the parent's consent?

Yes. By law the worker can interview a child at school or day care or another neutral location without the parent's prior knowledge or consent. But parents should be informed as soon as possible after completing the interview.

Can a social worker just take a child out of the home?

No. Only the police have that authority if they feel that a child is in imminent danger. A judge can issue an emergency custody order (ECO) for a child to be picked up and held for 72 hours before a hearing. KRS 620.040(3)(b) allows a hospital administrator or a physician treating a child to hold that child without a court order but they must request an ECO within 72 hours.

I strongly suspect abuse in a particular situation. What should I do?

If you suspect abuse, you should call your local Department for Community Based Services office or the Child Abuse Hot line (800) 752-6200.

If I report someone for child abuse, do I have to give my name?

No, abuse reports can be made anonymously, however in order to follow up with additional information, callers are encouraged to identify themselves.

What happens to children who are being abused if it is reported?

Reports of child abuse will be investigated by DCBS. If substantiated, children may be removed from the home and placed in foster care until their family situation can be evaluated and/or corrected. Treatment services are provided, which may make it possible for children to remain in the home.

*From the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Web site --
<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/frequently+Asked+Questions+About+Child+Abuse.htm>
3/2508*