

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS OF TEXAS

There are more than 60 children's advocacy centers (CACs) located throughout Texas. Your local CAC offers a child-friendly environment where children and their families can begin the healing process. Children receive a forensic interview, mental health services, medical services, and family advocacy services and resources.

It is the goal of all local children's advocacy centers to reduce the trauma to child abuse victims once they come forward to speak about their victimization.

Your local children's advocacy center provides services in your area for child victims of crime, but also offers volunteer opportunities and trainings for educators, local community members, and others interested in learning how they can make a difference for child victims of abuse.

Visit www.onewithcourage.org to learn more about children's advocacy centers in Texas, and to find your local center.



YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

CPS workers must complete investigation actions within 30 days from the date the report was received by the agency, unless a supervisor approves an extension. All reports must be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency for possible criminal prosecution.

Reports of child abuse or neglect are classified in two groups. The priority of the intake determines timeframes for initiating the investigation.

- Priority I reports include all reports of children who appear to face an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm. Investigations of these reports must be initiated within 24 hours of receiving the call report.
- Priority II reports include all reports of abuse or neglect that are not assigned as Priority I. These investigations must be initiated within 72 hours of receiving the report.

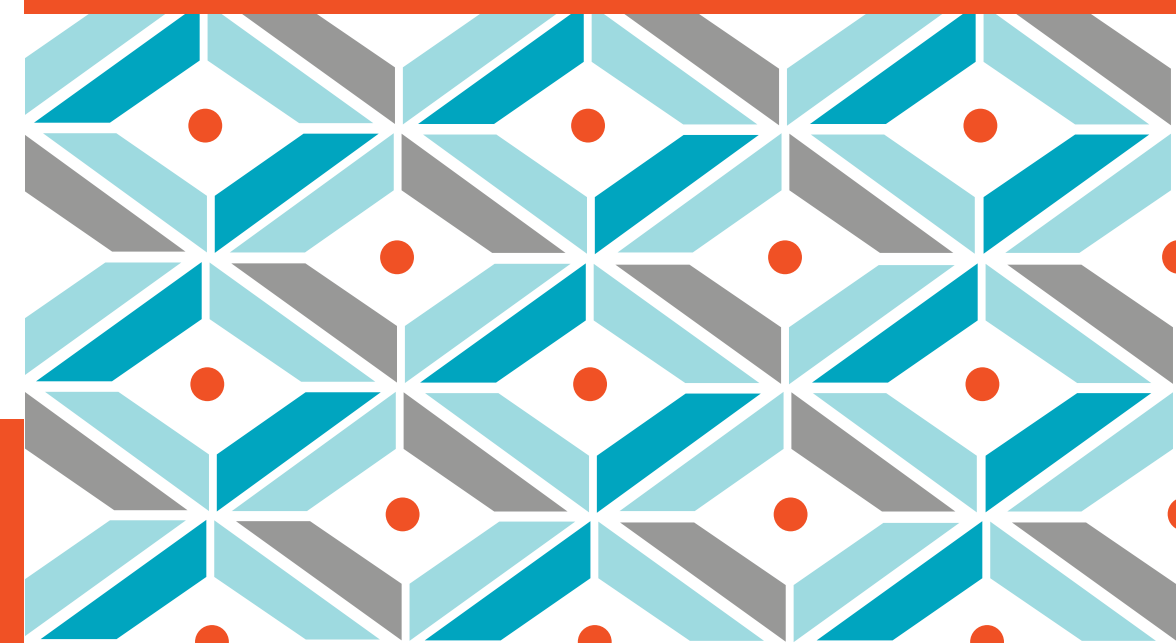
Not all reports will be assigned for investigation because some will not meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. Reasons for not assigning include: the situation does not appear to involve a reasonable likelihood that a child will be abused or neglected in the foreseeable future; the allegations are too vague or general to determine whether a child has been abused or neglected; the report does not give enough information to locate the child or the child's family; or, the situation is already under investigation, in which case, staff are to merge the intake with the open investigation.

Upon completion of the investigation, a reporter will receive a notification of findings letter. This letter will not contain specific information regarding the investigation. If you believe CPS has not acted appropriately in a situation involving you, you have a right to file a complaint with the Office of Consumer Affairs.

Office of Consumer Affairs oca@dfps.state.tx.us
1.800.720.7777 8am-5:30pm M-F



A TEXAS EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE AND NEGLECT





FACULTY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- You have the right and responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect — free of fear, intimidation, or regret.
- 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.”
- Education professionals may not delegate the duty to report suspected abuse or neglect to any other person.
- Individuals making reports of suspected abuse or neglect are not required by law to first report the suspicion to a peer, colleague, or supervisor.
- 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 consent or a court order. However, they may disclose your identity to the district attorney or law enforcement if the case requires further investigation.
- 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 professionals. This is critical to ensuring the integrity of any investigation and minimizing additional trauma to the child.

HOW TO RESPOND IF A CHILD REVEALS ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- Remain calm.
- Always believe the child, but do not make promises.
- Assure the child that he/she did the right thing and is not to blame for the abuse.
- Let the child tell you about the experience, but leave questioning to authorities.
- Report the abuse to CPS or law enforcement within 48 hours.
- Out of the presence of the child, make notes about the child’s language/demeanor in the event you are asked for a statement at a later time.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- You have the same rights and responsibilities as faculty members.
- Ensure all personnel are formally trained on an annual basis and prepared to deal with suspected abuse.
- There are steps you can take to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the reporter.
 - Do not discuss the report or the reporter.
 - You are not required to disclose knowledge of a report to a parent or caregiver. If asked, it may be easier to deny any knowledge of the report.
 - CPS or law enforcement may visit your campus during the course of an investigation. Avoid the use of public media (i.e., intercoms) to notify the appropriate staff.
 - Establish a known, private location within your campus where both reporters and/or students can confidentially meet with CPS or law enforcement.



KNOW THE LAW IN TEXAS

“A professional who has cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected is required by law to report the abuse or neglect within 48 hours of becoming aware of the incident. The professional cannot delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.”

Texas Family Code §261.101(b)

“A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report as provided in this chapter.”

Texas Family Code §261.109

It is the responsibility of professionals to report and the responsibility of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS and CPS) to investigate allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect.

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911

Statewide Intake 24/7 – 1.800.252.5400
www.txabusehotline.org