

Child Abuse, Abandonment & Neglect Reporting Requirements

All child care and private school personnel are mandated by law to report their suspicions of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment to the Florida Abuse Hotline in accordance with s. 39.201 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.).

- ◆ Child care and private school personnel must be alert to the physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect. "Child Abuse or Neglect" is defined in s. 39.201, F.S., as "harm or threatened harm" to a child's health (mental or physical) or welfare by the acts or omissions by a parent, adult household member, other person responsible for the child's welfare (including school personnel and administrators), or for purposes of reporting requirements by any person.

Categories include:

- ◆ Physical Abuse or Neglect (i.e., unexplained bruises, hunger, lack of supervision...)
 - ◆ Emotional Abuse or Neglect (i.e. impairment in the ability to function, depression...)
 - ◆ Sexual Abuse (i.e., withdrawal, excessive crying, physical symptoms ...)
- ◆ Child care and private school personnel have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Reports must be made immediately to the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System by:
 - ◆ Telephone at 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873), or
 - ◆ Fax at 1-800-914-0004, or
 - ◆ Online at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>.
 - ◆ All employees and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to the school's director. Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to the school's owner. Failure to report may result in termination of employment.
 - ◆ Child care and private school personnel have a duty to comply with child protective investigations and all other provisions of law relating to child abuse, abandonment, and neglect.
 - ◆ Failure to perform duties of a mandatory reporter pursuant to s. 39.201, F.S. constitutes a violation of the standards in ss. 402.301-319, F.S. and is a felony of the third degree. Remember, it is each child care and private school personnel's responsibility to report suspected abuse and/or neglect.
 - ◆ All reports are confidential. However, persons who are mandated reporters (child care and private school personnel) are required to give their name when making a report.
 - ◆ It is important to give as much identifying and factual information as possible when making a report.
 - ◆ Any person, when acting in good faith, is immune from liability in accordance with s. 39.203 (1)(a), F.S.