

## WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE EXPECTED FROM OKDHS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE?

Anyone who reports child abuse may obtain information on the status of a referral. Information that can be obtained may include whether the referral was investigated and how the investigation was ruled. You, as a mandated reporter, are NOT entitled to the details of the investigation.

## RYAN LUKE BILL

The Ryan Luke Bill specifies that schools are NOT responsible for notifying parents that a minor was interviewed at school regarding a child abuse report. The task of notifying parents is the responsibility of OKDHS.

## GUIDELINES WHEN A MINOR DISCLOSES

DO believe the minor. Let the authorities validate or rule out whether any abuse happened.

DO stay calm, receptive and nonjudgmental. Be careful not to criticize or belittle the minor's family.

DO reassure the minor that they have done the right thing by telling what has happened and have the right to be safe. Listen carefully, with sensitivity and without interruption.

DO use the same vocabulary that the minor uses if you need to clarify any part of their disclosure. Document the specific words that the minor uses, even if graphic.

DO ask only enough information to clarify your suspicion and help you decide whether the minor is in danger.

DO tell the minor that you have to tell someone who can help.

DO seek out support to help you work through your emotional feelings after the disclosure is reported, if needed. Listening to an abusive experience can be difficult.

DO NOT start your own investigation.

DO NOT suggest to a minor, or an adult, that they have been abused. It is never appropriate to place that suggestion into the mind of a minor or an adult.

If you have been the victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon or individual representing the Catholic Church in the United States, there are several things you can do:

- Contact the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Reporting is mandatory if the victim is a minor: **(800) 522-3511**. Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency to determine if the incident falls within the statute of limitations in the jurisdiction in which the offense occurred.
- Contact the Office of Safe Environment or the archdiocesan hotline. Both numbers are on the front of this brochure. The Victims Assistance Coordinator will help you in making a formal complaint of abuse to the archdiocese, arranging a personal interview with the archbishop or his representative and obtaining support and pastoral counseling.
- Contact a private attorney and/or a support group, if needed.

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is committed to creating a safe environment for children and young people to experience and grow in their faith.

If you have any questions about the Safe Environment Office, policies, procedures or anything in this brochure, contact the Safe Environment Office.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE



### Page Hauser

Safe Environment Coordinator  
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(405) 709-2748  
archokc.org/safe-environment

## PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF MINORS

### OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**(800) 522-3511**

### ARCHDIOCESAN ABUSE HOTLINE

**(405) 720-9878**

### SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

**(405) 709-2748**

**archokc.org/safe-environment**



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Oklahoma City

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is defined by law as harm or threatened harm to a minor's health or safety by the person responsible for the minor's health or welfare, including abuse and sexual exploitation.

**Physical Abuse:** non-accidental physical injury to a minor under the age of 18.

**Sexual Abuse:** any sexual activity, sexual exploitation or propositioning of a minor for the sexual gratification of another person.

**Physical Neglect:** failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a minor under the age of 18 with the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, protection or supervision.

**Psychological Maltreatment:** rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness, mental health, medical and educational needs. A minor may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at a given time.

## WHO IS REQUIRED TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE?

State law requires every person, private citizen or professional, who has reason to believe that a minor under 18 is being abused or is in danger of being abused MUST report the suspicion of abuse to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) or the police department.

"Failure to report" is a crime. It is the failure to take reasonable action to remedy or prevent child abuse or neglect. Concealing the identity of an abuser and failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime and morally wrong. No person, regardless of his or her relationship with the minor or family, is exempt from reporting suspected abuse. A person reporting in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal prosecution.

Reporting is not an accusation or a proven fact. It is a REQUEST for an investigation to gather facts and protect the child from harm.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO PROVE THE ABUSE prior to reporting. Your role is not to be an investigator, therapist or social worker. DO NOT try to probe or gain more information. Your primary responsibility is to REPORT. The investigation and/or substantiating of a child abuse report is the responsibility of OKDHS and law enforcement officials.

A minor never should be made to repeat his/her disclosure to a colleague or supervisor for the purpose of confirming suspicion before a report is made. Multiple interviews before OKDHS or law enforcement are contacted can taint an investigation and possibly jeopardize the safety of the minor. If additional incidents of abuse occur or are suspected after the initial report has been made, another referral to OKDHS with additional concerns and information should be made.

## HOW DO I REPORT A SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE?

RECORD the date, time and a factual account of the meeting with the minor as soon as possible, and sign the account. The person with direct knowledge of abuse or neglect should make the report.

REPORT immediately to OKDHS using the 24-hour hotline: **(800) 522-3511**. If the minor is in imminent danger, call 9-1-1.

REPORT any suspected or known abuse of minors by church personnel by also calling the archdiocesan hotline: **(405) 720-9878**.

## IS THE REPORT I MAKE CONFIDENTIAL?

OKDHS and state law require strict maintenance of the confidentiality of the reporters of child abuse. If the incident does become court involved, the reporters name could be requested by the court. It is rare, however, for the identity of the reporter to be known in court. Anonymous reports are accepted for investigative purposes. Reports to the archdiocese are also confidential.

## BE PREPARED TO GIVE:

- The minor's name and present location
- Family name and address
- Names and ages of siblings, if any
- Language and ethnicity of family
- The suspected abuser's name, if known
- A description of what you have seen or heard.
- The name(s) of any other people having knowledge of the abuse
- Your name and phone number (the report can be made anonymously)
- School, church or work address

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS MADE?

Currently, the report is screened by a supervisor to determine if the allegation meets the statutory definition of abuse and neglect, and if the report falls within the scope of responsibility of OKDHS.

If the alleged abuse is perpetrated by someone other than a caretaker, OKDHS is required to forward the report to law enforcement. OKDHS is mandated to investigate or conduct assessments regarding allegations of abuse or neglect by a parent or caretaker.

The difference between a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation vs. assessment is this: A CPS investigation is conducted when the report concerns abuse or neglect that is serious, could be extremely dangerous, or when there have been many previous reports of abuse or neglect. A CPS assessment is conducted when the report concerns abuse or neglect that is not serious or extremely dangerous.