

A Community Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect



NH Department of Health & Human Services
Division for Children, Youth and Families
Child Protective Services
www.dhhs.nh.gov

Division for Children, Youth and Families
Child Protective Services

Vision Statement

We envision a state in which every child lives in a nurturing family and plays and goes to school in communities that are safe and cherish children.

Mission Statement

We are dedicated to assisting families in the protection, development, permanency, and well-being of their children and the communities in which they live.

**Department of Health and Human Services
Division for Children, Youth, and Families
Child Protection Agency**

About Us

The Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), Child Protective Services is the agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that provides protective and preventive services to children, youth, and their families. Child Protective Services strives to protect children from abuse and neglect and to help families nurture their children into physically and emotionally healthy adults.

Child protection and family support services are provided by Child Protective Service Workers (CPSWs) in 11 District Offices throughout New Hampshire. The investigatory process is a difficult time for families and can cause stress. Child Protective Services and the community share the responsibility to provide supportive connections for the child and family during this time.

DCYF is committed to a statewide Practice Model. NH's Practice Model outlines the beliefs (see inside back cover), values and principles that drive our organization's approach to doing business and providing services to families. Through the Practice Model, DCYF keeps the focus on the importance of the work, and shares responsibility with the family and community to identify family's strengths and improve issues with community supports.

About Child Abuse and Neglect

Nationally, over four million children are reported as abused or neglected each year. In New Hampshire alone, Child Protective Services receives approximately 20,000 telephone calls annually. Of those telephone calls, more than half are concerns for child abuse or neglect. Child Protective Services annually assesses thousands of reports of suspected abuse and neglect.

Every family can encounter difficult life challenges. Families can experience overwhelming frustration raising their children, especially when they are facing major sources of stress. Although they may only want to do what is best, challenges may lead to situations that can harm and endanger their children and youth.

This booklet is designed to help you report instances of child abuse or neglect that you know about or have reason to suspect. This is the first step in protecting New Hampshire's children and strengthening our state's families. Prevention and identification of child abuse and neglect is a community responsibility that depends on the cooperation of all community members. We must work together to protect our children.

What if I Suspect That a Child or Youth Is Being Abused or Neglected?

New Hampshire law, RSA 169-C, the Child Protection Act, mandates that **any person** who has reason to suspect that a child under the age of 18 has been abused or neglected must make a report to the Division for Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services

DCYF's Central Intake Unit reviews all such reports made (within the state) and determines if an assessment of the reported circumstances is required. If you suspect that a child has been or is being abused or neglected, contact the DCYF Central Intake Unit at

1-800-894-5533 or (603) 271-6556

Out of State: 1-603-271-6556

Monday through Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If it is necessary to call after work hours, call the local police department or State Police



What Is Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and child neglect can take many forms. Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual. Neglect can be as damaging and life threatening as abuse.

Physical abuse is harm to a child caused intentionally or from excessive or inappropriate discipline methods. Common signs of physical abuse are bruises, welts, human bite marks, bald spots, cigarette burns, immersion burns, fractures, lacerations, and abrasions.

Emotional abuse is psychological injury to a child caused by excessive belittling, berating, name-calling, or similar acts. It might include parents not securing needed psychological treatment for a child.

Sexual abuse is improper sexual activity or contact with - or any form of sexual exploitation of - a child or youth, including incest or the making of pornography.

Neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, supervision, or education as required by law. It may involve abandonment or parental alcohol and drug abuse.

Many other circumstances that are not cited in the above examples may still result in child abuse or neglect. Child Protective Services encourages all individuals with concerns to call the DCYF Central Intake Unit to discuss those concerns. Call:

1-800-894-5533 or (603) 271-6556

Commonly Asked Questions

1. When Should I Report My Concerns?

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, state law requires that you report your concerns to the Central Intake Unit immediately. Proof of abuse or neglect is not required before reporting. Early reporting often prevents greater harm to children and other family members. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call the local police department. The police are able to respond more quickly in life-threatening situations than Child Protective Services can. Reports that need to be made after regular work hours should also be directed to the police. Child Protective Services maintains a close relationship with local law enforcement. When there is a need for Child Protective Services to follow up on an after hours situation, law enforcement will contact Child Protection accordingly.

2. What if I'm Mistaken?

New Hampshire law, RSA 169-C, states that any person who makes a report in good faith is immune from any civil or criminal liability. It is better to make your concerns known to Child Protective Services than remain silent and possibly allow a child to be seriously harmed. Remember, it is the agency's responsibility to assess the information you provide about the child and the family.

3. Can I Remain Anonymous?

Yes. We understand that reporting your suspicions is a big step to take. We also understand that you may be concerned about possible retaliation from family members or others if they discover you reported your concerns.

When interviewing families, the Child Protection agency focuses on the content of the report, not on who reported. Unless you give your consent or unless the court orders it, the agency will not reveal your name. However, you may be the only witness to the alleged abuse or neglect, and for this reason, your identity is very important to Child Protective Services.

4. Should I Tell the Family That I Have Called?

It is important to be honest with families. If you have concerns that parents may be abusing or neglecting their child or children, it is acceptable to talk with them if you feel comfortable doing this.

If your relationship with the child or parents is of a professional nature, explaining your obligation to report your suspicions may deflect them from blaming the child for disclosure of abuse or neglect.

Circumstances may occur when Child Protective Services will prefer that you do not inform a family about making a report. An example is the case of a child's safety being put at further risk of harm by parents knowing the child disclosed information to you. Before informing a parent of the report, it's a good idea to discuss the matter with Central Intake staff.

5. Will I Be Asked a Lot of Questions?

The Intake Child Protective Services Worker will ask many questions about the incident and your knowledge of the family involved. The questions are intended to give a clearer picture of the event and the family. You will not be expected to know all the answers.

6. Do I Need to Provide a Written Report?

RSA 169-C:30 requires an oral report to be made immediately and allows DCYF to request a written report within 48 hours. Child Protective Services requests written reports from doctors, nurses, therapists, teachers, and other professional reporters.

7. What if a Report Is Not Referred for Assessment?

The decision whether to forward a report to a District Office for further assessment is made by the CPSW and Supervisor at the Central Intake Unit, in accordance with definitions of child abuse and neglect in RSA 169-C:3.

Some reports do not meet the criteria for Child Protective Services involvement and may not be accepted for assessment, however they may be referred to other agencies. When you call you will be told whether or not the report will be accepted or not. If you disagree with the Central Intake Unit's decision, you may contact the Central Intake Unit Supervisor to discuss your concerns further. The Supervisor may offer suggestions for working with family members if you have a personal or professional relationship with them.

8. Can I Call Back for Information?

Child Protection's involvement in a family's life is highly sensitive and confidential. DCYF is restricted by state and federal laws as to the information it can discuss with individuals outside the immediate family. However, if you have further information about a family that you know is involved with Child Protective Services, please contact the Central Intake Unit at **1-800-894-5533**.

9. Does Law Enforcement Get Involved?

RSA 169-C:38 requires DCYF to report allegations of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse to law enforcement. The Attorney General's Child Abuse and Neglect Protocols require coordination or joint investigation of these reports by DCYF and Law Enforcement.

10. What Happens Next?

When the report is forwarded to the District Office for assessment, a CPSW will meet with the family and interview household members. The discussions will focus on eliminating danger, identifying strengths and the resources of the family, and how to partner with the family to meet the needs of their children and youth. When an assessment is completed, a decision is made either to close the assessment, close the assessment with referrals to community services, open a non-court case or file a petition of abuse or neglect in the Court. If abuse and/or neglect did occur Child Protective Services shall take action deemed necessary to assure the safety of the children or youth.

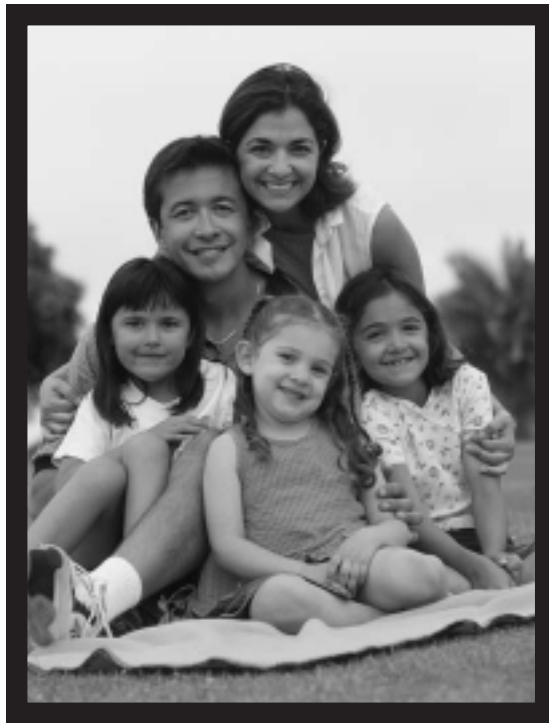
The CPSW will partner with families to develop a plan and find appropriate community programs to connect them with to address their needs. Community based services will be utilized to help families make positive change and help prevent abuse and neglect.

11. Where Else Can a Family Get Help?

Family Resource Centers are located in many communities throughout the state. They offer a wide range of services, which can help parents learn skills to more effectively parent and prevent the situations that could lead to abuse and neglect. A list of these centers is at the back of this booklet.

12. How Do I Make a Report in an Emergency?

If you have concerns about child abuse or neglect on weekends, holidays, or after work hours (8 AM to 4:30 PM), or if you believe a child is in immediate danger, call the local police.



**Offices of the
Department of Health and Human Services**

Berlin District Office

650 Main St - Ste 200
Berlin NH 03570-2496
(603) 752-7800
(800) 972-6111

Claremont District Office

17 Water Street
Claremont NH 03743
(603) 542-9544
(800) 982-1001

Concord District Office

40 Terrill Park Drive
Concord NH 03301-1025
(603) 271-6202
(800) 322-9191

Conway District Office

73 Hobbs Street
Conway NH 03818-6188
(603) 447-3841
(800) 552-4628

Keene District Office

809 Court Street
Keene NH 03431-1712
(603) 357-3510
(800) 624-9700

Laconia District Office

65 Beacon Street West
Laconia NH 03246
(603) 524-4485
(800) 322-2121

Littleton District Office

80 North Littleton Road
Littleton NH 03561-3814
(603) 444-6786
(800) 552-8959

Manchester District Office

195 McGregor St
South Tower, Suite 110
Manchester NH 03102-3762
(603) 668-2330
(800) 852-7493

Rochester District Office

150 Wakefield St Ste 22
Rochester NH 03867-1309
(603) 332-9120
(800) 862-5300

Seacoast District Office

50 International Drive
Portsmouth, NH 03801-2862
(603) 433-8300
(800) 821-0326

Southern District Office

3 Pine Street Ext. Suite Q
Nashua NH 03060-3213
(603) 883-7726
(800) 852-0632

Family Resource Centers

Child and Family Services
464 Chestnut Street
Manchester, NH 03105
www.cfsnh.org
603-518-4000

Children's Place & Parent Education
Centers
27 Burns Avenue
Concord NH 03302
www.tcpnh.org
603-224-9920

Children Unlimited, Inc
187 West Main Street
Conway, NH 03818
www.childrenunlimitedinc.org
603-447-6356

Concord Heights Neighborhood
Family Center
The Dame School
14 Canterbury Road
Concord, NH 03301
www.concord.k12.nh.us/comm/dam/dame.html
603-225-0830

Diana Love Center for Children &
Families
169 Main Street
Claremont, NH 03743
www.dianalovecenter.org
603-542-1848

Families First Health and Support
Center
100 Campus Drive, Suite 12
Portsmouth, NH 03801
www.familiesfirstseacoast.org
603-422-8208

The River Center: A Family and
Community Resource Center
46 Concord Street
Peterborough, NH 03458
www.rivercenter.us
603-924-6306

Family Connection Center
NH Department of Corrections
Located in Concord & Berlin Prisons
PO Box 14
Concord, NH 03301

Family Education Collaborative at
the YWCA
72 Concord Street
Manchester, NH 03101
www.ywcanh.org
603-625-5785

Family Resource Center of Central
NH
Lakes Region Community Services
635 Main Street
Laconia, NH 03246
www.lrcs.org
603-524-1741

Family Resource - Coos County
123 Main Street
Gorham, NH 03581
www.frcberlin-gorham.org
603-466-5190

Family Resource Center of Greater
Nashua
47 Grand Avenue
Nashua, NH 03060
www.bgcn.org
603-883-0523

Franklin Family Resource Center
200 Sanborn Road
Franklin, NH 03235
www.caseyfamilyservices.org
603-934-3170
800-417-7375

Good Beginnings of the Upper Valley
PO Box 5054
West Lebanon, NH 03784
www.goodbeginnings.net/uppervalley
603-298-9524

The Grapevine Family & Community
Resource Center
4 Aiken Street
Antrim, NH 03440
www.antrimnh.org
603-588-2620

HUB Family Resource Center
23 Atkinson Street
Dover, NH 03820
www.hubfamilies.org
603-749-8800

Riverbend Parent Child Centers
105 Loudon Road
Concord, NH 03302
www.riverbendcmhc.org
603-228-0547 ext. 4009

The Upper Room- A Family
Resource
Center
36 Tsienneto Road
PO Box 1017
Derry, NH 03038
www.urteachers.org
603-437-8477

VNA Community Services Inc.
VNA Child Care & Family Resource
Center
VNA Parent Baby Adventure
435 South Main Street
Manchester, NH 03102
www.manchestervna.org
603-666-5982

White Birch Community Center
51 Hall Avenue
PO Box 2035
Henniker, NH 03242
www.whitebirchcommunitycenter.org
603-428-7860

Whole Village Family Resource
Center
258 Highland Street
Plymouth, NH 03264
www.wholevillage.net
603-536-3720



New Hampshire Practice Model Beliefs:

- ✳ **Prevention reduces child abuse and neglect.**
- ✳ **All children/youth should be safe.**
- ✳ **All children/youth need and deserve permanency.**
- ✳ **All children, youth and families deserve a life of well-being.**
- ✳ **All families have strengths.**
- ✳ **All children/youth belong with their family.**
- ✳ **Everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect**



**For further information or
to report child abuse or neglect,
call the
NH Department of Health and Human Services
Division for Children, Youth and Families
Central Intake Unit**

**1-800-894-5533
or
603-271-6556**

**Out-of-State
603-271-6556**

