

You must report suspected abuse

If you know or have reason to believe one of your students has been the victim of child abuse or neglect, Minnesota law requires that you report it to the local social service agency, police or sheriff's department, or the Minnesota Department of Education (if the suspected abuse occurred at school). It is not sufficient to simply report it to the administration. While some districts ask that teachers contact their principal before making a mandated report, that is NOT a substitute for contacting the appropriate outside agencies.

For the child's protection—and yours—report any suspicion you have right away, even if you are unsure. The law requires an immediate verbal report and a written report within 72 hours (weekends and holidays excluded) if you have reason to believe there is abuse or neglect. The law also provides you with immunity for reports made in good faith.

Do not take it upon yourself to investigate whether abuse occurred. If you are unsure, you should err on the side of reporting and leave the investigation to the proper authorities.

One sign or symptom may not necessarily indicate child abuse or neglect, but some clues might lead you to suspect it:

- A child who has a pattern of unexplained injuries or an inordinate number of “explained” ones.
- A young child who comes to school dangerously and inappropriately dressed for the season.
- A child who is habitually late or often absent from school.
- A child who arrives early and leaves late because he or she is reluctant to go home.
- A child who is unusually fearful of adults or other children.
- A child who goes to the bathroom with difficulty or has trouble sitting.
- A child who is constantly tired, thin or shows evidence of malnutrition.

