

How to Report Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Important information for anyone working or volunteering in a parish or Catholic school

Anyone working or volunteering in a parish or Catholic school who knows or has reason to believe that a minor (a child under the age of 18) is being abused or neglected or has been abused or neglected must report the abuse or neglect to proper civil authorities within 24 hours of the abuse or neglect becoming known to him or her.

Many people working or volunteering in a parish or Catholic school, including clergy, are mandated reporters under state law and must report abuse or neglect of a child to proper civil authorities within 24 hours or face criminal charges.

Under the law, mandated reporters must also follow up with a written report to civil authorities within 72 hours, exclusive of weekends and holidays.

Outline of Reporting Process

1. Contact proper civil authorities – this is the local law enforcement or child protection agency in the county where the suspected abuse occurred.

NOTE: You may ask for the support of another person, such as the school principal or director of religious education, and have that person with you when you make the call. However, the report must come from the person who has first-hand knowledge of the reasons to suspect abuse.

2. Provide identifying information about the child, parent/guardian, suspected abuser, and anyone else involved.
3. Report as many details as possible about what happened.
4. Contact the person in charge at the parish or Catholic school where the suspected abuser works or volunteers.
5. Contact the diocese if the suspected abuser is a priest, deacon, religious, or any lay leader of a parish or Catholic school within the diocese.
6. Document and keep information you report and to whom you make reports.

Simply report what you know or suspect. The law enforcement or child protection agency will undertake any necessary investigation after your report is filed. Your role is simply to report what a child has made known to you or you have observed.

We all want a safe community for our children and young people where they can grow up safe with caring adults. The Diocese of Winona-Rochester is determined to shape a safe environment for all children and young people in our churches, schools and communities.

All employees and volunteers in our churches and schools must be background checked, sign a code of conduct and attend a VIRTUS Protecting God's Children® for Adults. We all must do our part to protect the most vulnerable.