



## FAITH COMMUNITIES:

# KIDS NEED YOU TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### Your role as a mandated reporter

Faith communities can serve as safe and caring places for kids. Creating child protection policies that set clear expectations for adult conduct and accountability is crucial. One practice is making sure all adults know and understand their role in reporting child abuse and neglect. Faith communities are #Essential4Kids!

**If a child discloses to you that they have been abused** Stay calm and listen with compassion. Tell the child, "I believe you." Only ask open ended questions, like, "Tell me more". Avoid trying to dig for details and do not have multiple adults question the child's story. This can re-traumatize the child and damage the investigation and/or prosecution.

**Clergy and any person with responsibility for the care of children are mandated reporters and are required by law to directly and immediately report child abuse and neglect if there is reasonable suspicion.** This means you have witnessed abuse, become aware of, or believe a child is unsafe. You don't need proof!

Reporting abuse is an individual legal responsibility, no faith leader or administrator can prevent or delay a report from being made. When you make a report in good faith you are protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action.

**Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services** When you report, you are asking for a professional to help a child and their family. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation.

## Where To Report

Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline  
1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL  
Online at [dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm](https://dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm)  
If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.



## Effectively Reporting

**Explain how the suspected abuse has impacted the child.**

Be precise with dates, times, and locations, if available. Describe specific changes in behavior/emotions: expressions of fear, interactions with other children and adults, impact on grades, and/or impact of an unsafe environment.

## Signs a child is not safe

### Physical Abuse

Child appears frightened of the caregiver.  
Caregiver offers no/odd explanation of a child's injury. Does the story match the injury?

### Online Abuse

Unexplained gifts, money, game subscriptions  
Child presents themselves as older online.  
Child sends revealing photos or videos of oneself.  
Child becomes secretive: minimizing screens or hiding devices.

### Emotional Abuse

Caregiver consistently belittles or berates the child and refuses to help the child when needed.  
Appears emotionally unattached to caregiver and others.

### Sexual Abuse

Demonstrates unusual sexual knowledge or behavior for their age.  
Child attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment.  
Witnessing an adult inappropriately touching or saying sexual things to/with a child; exposing a child to pornography.

### Neglect

Caregiver is abusing alcohol or other drugs.  
Caregiver's physical/mental health prevents them from providing for child's basic needs.  
Child begs or steals food and/or has severe consistent poor hygiene.  
Unlocked weapons or guns in the home

### Pay close attention to children who:

Take care of other children and/or have limited support systems.  
Require assistance due to physical, mental, behavioral or medical disabilities or delays.  
Live in a home with domestic violence.

**TRUST YOUR GUT: If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe - report.**