

Persons Required to Report Child Abuse

Duty to Report (Section 43-21-353)

Any attorney, physician, dentist, intern, resident, nurse, psychologist, social worker, family protection worker, family protection specialist, child care giver, minister, law enforcement officer, public or private school employee or any person having cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child, shall cause an oral report to be made immediately by telephone or otherwise and followed up as soon thereafter as possible by report in writing to the Department of Human Services, and immediately a referral shall be made by the Department of Human Services to the youth court intake unit, which unit shall promptly comply with **Section 43-21-357**. Where appropriate, the Department of Human Services shall additionally make a referral to the youth court prosecutor. Upon receiving a report that a child has been sexually abused, or burned, tortured, mutilated or otherwise physically abused in such a manner as to cause serious bodily harm, or upon receiving any report of abuse that would be a felony under state or federal law, the Department of Human Services shall immediately notify the law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the abuse occurred and shall notify the appropriate prosecutor within forty-eight (48) hours, and the Department of Human Services shall have the duty to provide the law enforcement agency all the names and facts known at the time of the report; this duty shall be of a continuing nature. The law enforcement agency and the Department of Human Services shall investigate the reported abuse immediately and shall file a preliminary report with the appropriate prosecutor's office within twenty-four (24) hours and shall make additional reports as new or additional information or evidence becomes available. The Department of Human Services shall advise the clerk of the youth court and the youth court prosecutor of all cases of abuse reported to the department within seventy-two (72) hours and shall update such report as information becomes available.

In Mississippi, the Department of Human Services operates a statewide Child/Adult Abuse/Neglect 24 hour hotline to receive reports of suspected abuse/neglect pursuant to the Youth Court Law, Section 43-21-354, Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, and the Mississippi Vulnerable Adult Action, Section 43-47-7(6).

HOTLINE: 1-800-222-8000 - or 601-359-4991

Mississippi Department of Human Services
750 North State Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39202

Indicators of Child Abuse/Neglect

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is non-accidental, serious physical injury of a child, including beatings, burns, bites, strangulation, immersion in scalding water, resulting in bruises, welts, broken bones, scars, serious internal injuries. Watch for unexplained bruises, bites, black eyes, broken bones, fading bruises or other noticeable marks.

Sexual Abuse:

Child sexual abuse is sexual contact between a child and an adult or older child for the sexual gratification of the offender. It can include both physical and non-physical contact. Watch for a child's difficulty in walking or sitting, a refusal to change for gym or participate in physical activity, or demonstration of bizarre, over-sophistication, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. Watch for extremely compliant, passive, aggressive or demanding behaviors, or inappropriately adult or infantile, delayed physical or emotional development, talk of or attempted suicide.

Neglect:

Neglect is the withholding of or failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene, or supervision needed for optimal growth and development. Watch for frequently missed school days, begging or stealing food or money, a lack of needed medical or dental care or glasses, a consistently dirty appearance or severe body odor, or alcohol or drug abuse.

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