

Reporting “Ministry-Related” Child Sexual Abuse

1. Contact the County Department of Social Services, **Child Protective Services Division – 24-Hour State Hotline (800) 552-7096**

Virginia Department of Social Services (804) 726-7000
Virginia State Police (804) 780-5100

2. Contact the Diocese of Richmond Pastoral Center: **Safe Environment Coordinator (804) 622-5203**

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Virginia

Why You Should Report Child Abuse:

Reporting suspected child abuse can be the first important step in stopping the abuse and protecting the child from future harm. By reporting, you are helping the family get services and help that they need. Failing to report suspected cases of child abuse may result in continuing abuse. Abused children may carry the trauma associated with the abuse throughout their entire lives unless treatment, assistance, and support are provided.

Because child abuse rarely stops without intervention and help, every citizen should report suspected child abuse and neglect. You can help stop the cycle of abuse by notifying your county Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services Division, when you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected.

Your report can be anonymous. You do not have to give your name when making a report. If a report is not accepted for investigation and the reporter still has concerns, he/she may request a review of the agency’s decision by contacting the agency. If the decision is made by DSS not to file a petition and the reporter does not agree, he/she can request a review by the District Attorney.

How to Make a Report:

You can make a report of child abuse by calling, writing, or visiting your county Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services Division. The address and phone number can be found in The Blue Pages of Government Listings in the local phone book or by calling the 24-Hour State Hotline: (800) 552-7096.

A social worker will listen to you and take down all the information you give. It is helpful if you can share the following:

- The name, address, and age of the child.
- The name and address of the child’s parent, guardian, or caretaker.
- The child’s condition, including the nature and extent of the injury.
- Any information regarding the presence of weapons in the home, alcohol/drug abuse, or other factors affecting a social worker’s safety are helpful.

What Happens After a Report of Child Abuse Has Been Made?

After you have discussed your concerns with the social worker at Child Protective Services, a determination will be made as to whether or not the Department of Social Services will investigate. If intervention is warranted, Child Protective Services is required to initiate an investigation within 24 hours for abuse and within 72 hours in the case of suspected neglect. The investigation will include a visit to the child’s home and school and interviews with those who are in contact with the child. The safety of the child is the top priority. A full assessment will be made to determine future actions involving the child(ren) and the family.