

Mandatory Child Abuse Policy

Fort Belknap Child Care Program

Purpose

The Fort Belknap Child Care program is committed to safeguarding the well-being of the children entrusted to our care. As a result this ***Mandatory Child Abuse reporting Policy*** addresses; the program's mandatory reporting obligations when child abuse is suspected and describes what to report; and details of how to make a report. This policy describes the mandatory child abuse reporting obligation for all providers and staff. It describes the basic reporting duty of providers and staff who have reasonable cause to suspect that a child, who is in their care, may be a victim of child abuse.

Mandated Reporters Obligations

Child Care Providers have consistent contact with children for extended periods of time. Because of the amount of time child care providers spend with the children, child care providers are often in the best position to identify suspected abuse or neglect. A mandated reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to relevant authorities. It is the basic duty of child care providers/staff to report any reasonable suspicion of maltreatment of a child in their care. If the mandated reporter has reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected or that conditions may exist in the home that may result in abuse or neglect there is no reason, to err on the side of caution. Report any suspicion in which a child's welfare may be at risk.

It must be noted that Mandatory Reporters are only mandatory reporters when they are on the job. When they are not acting in their "official or professional capacity", they are no different than any other person, and are not required to report child abuse or neglect which they suspect or become aware through means other than their official capacity. It is strongly recommended any suspicion of child abuse and neglect be reported to; The Montana Child Abuse Hotline **(1-866-820-5437)**, Child Protective Services, or local law enforcement.

Confidentiality of Reporters

The identity of the reporter and the identity of any person(s) who provided information on the alleged child abuse or neglect incident must not be revealed to the child's parent, guardian or other subjects of the complaint unless a court requests the information.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

There are four major categories of maltreatment

1. **Neglect** - defined as parent/guardian's inattention to the basic needs of the child. types of neglect can be; physical, medical, inadequate supervision, environmental, emotional, educational, and includes suspected exposure to drugs.

2. **Physical Abuse** - any non-accident physical injury sustained from any of the following; being burned, beaten, kicked, punched, bit, hit, or any other types of physical attacks, including shaking a baby.
3. **Sexual Abuse** - sexual abuse is defined as adult sexual behavior with a child. It can include; fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, sexual exploitation or exposure to pornography.
4. **Psychological maltreatment** - Psychological or emotional abuse is described as; belittling, rejection, isolation, terrorizing or ignoring. This type of abuse can have a negative effect on the children's feelings, behaviors and thoughts and most often shows up as behavior problems.

Procedure to Report Abuse

If a Provider or Caretaker witnesses, is told of, or suspects any of the afore mentioned maltreatment of children in their care, they must immediately call the National Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-422-4453** or the Montana Child Abuse Hotline (**1-866-820-5437**). If there is immediate danger to the welfare of the child, you must call "911".

If you suspect child abuse, remember do not ask leading questions (e.g., questions that attempt to guide the child's response), or by supplying children with terms or information. **It is the job of the Child Protective Specialist or Law Enforcement Officers who have been trained to undertake this type of investigation. Child Care Providers can harm subsequent CPS or Law Enforcement processes by probing for excessive answers. So do not interrogate a child if abuse or neglect is suspected or reported by a child.**

At a minimum, the following details must be reported;

1. **The Allegation** - must be specific of what type of maltreatment is evident.
2. **The Victim** - Name, Date of Birth or age and sex
3. **Incident Information** - What is suspected, or what happened, where it happened, when it happened and the time of day, how it happened and potential witnesses.
4. **Suspect Information** - information about the accused, (if known), including name and contact information
5. **Person Reporting** - person initiating the report, contact information and relationship to the victim. The child abuse hotline will instruct reporter of what steps to initiate.
6. **Document Event** - a verbal report must be given to your immediate supervisor(Child Care Director). At this point the supervisor will give you a written report that must be filled out detailing the incident.