



## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

*PLEASE REMEMBER: YOUR ROLE IS TO REPORT  
THERE IS TO BE NO INVESTIGATION  
BY YOU OR ANYONE ELSE AT THE PARISH/SCHOOL/DIOCESAN LEVEL*

As of July 1, 2012, Georgia law states that all employees, volunteers, and clergy are MANDATORY REPORTERS and are required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.

### **What do I need to know?**

All suspected child abuse must be immediately reported but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made immediately to the Supervisor of the Parish or School (Pastor or Principal) and the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS).

### **Who Is a Mandatory Reporter?**

Mandatory reporters are legally required to report allegations and suspicions of child abuse. Failure to report can result in legal action. Mandatory reporters include:

- Physicians licensed to practice medicine; interns; residents; hospital or medical personnel; dentists; podiatrists; registered professional nurses or licensed practical nurses; or nurse's aides
- School teachers; school administrators; school guidance counselors, visiting teachers, school social workers, or school psychologists;
- Licensed psychologists; persons participating in internships to obtain licensing as psychologists; professional counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists; child-counseling personnel;
- Child welfare agency personnel (including any child-caring institution, child-placing agency, maternity home, family day-care home, group day-care home, and day-care center);
- Child service organization personnel (see below for definition)
- Law enforcement personnel;
- Persons who process or produce visual or printed matter; and
- Reproductive health care facility or pregnancy resource center personnel and volunteers

Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5(c)(1)

The new law defines "child service organization personnel" to include volunteers as follows:

'Child service organization personnel' means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children. (includes all priests, all deacons, all seminarians, all religious, all staff, and all volunteers) Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5(b)(5)

## When Should I Make a Report?

Any Church Personnel who has reasonable cause to believe that Child Abuse has occurred and who has mandatory reporting requirements under federal, state or local law, including, but not limited to, O.C.G.A. S 19-7-5, shall report, or cause a report of that abuse to be made as required by law. An oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney. After such report has been made, a copy of that report shall be sent immediately and confidentially to the Archbishop, or the Vicar General, or, in their absence the Safe Environment Office, who, in turn, will advise the Archbishop.

If you are NOT a mandatory reporter and have reasonable cause to believe that Child Abuse has occurred, you shall immediately confidentially report the information to the Archbishop's Office at 404-920-7315, or 404-920-7550 or contact our 24 hours reporting hotline at 1-888-437-0764, unless to do so would violate the priest-penitent relationship recognized within the Sacrament of Penance.

## Who Do I Call if I Am a Mandatory Reporter?

1. If the alleged/suspected victim is a minor, call the DFACS (**immediately but no later than 24 hours**) or in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.
  - a) A list of DFACS contact numbers can be found at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/report/dfcs.html> or through the DFACS webpage at <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/county-offices> or call them at 1-855-GACHILD (if you print a copy of DFACS numbers from their webpage, please update the hard copy regularly since DFACS updates the information frequently) Be prepared to give the child's name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator, and his/her relationship to the child.
  - b) Follow-up with a letter to DFACS. You may contact the Safe Environment office for assistance via email or phone at [jbroel@archatl.com](mailto:jbroel@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550
2. Call the Office of the District Attorney (immediately but no later than 24 hours). (If involves Church Personnel)
  - a) A list of DA office contact numbers can be found at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/report/da.html>
  - b) Be prepared to give them the suspected victim's name, address, age, the nature of the suspected abuse, the name of the suspected perpetrator, and his/her relationship to the suspected victim.
  - b) Follow-up with a letter to the District Attorney's Office. You may contact the Safe Environment office for assistance via email or phone at [jbroel@archatl.com](mailto:jbroel@archatl.com) or 404-920-7550
3. If the alleged abuse involves church personnel (priests, deacons, seminarians, religious sisters or brothers, teachers, employees or volunteers) do all of the following after contacting DFACS and the District Attorney's Office:
  - a) Call the Archdiocese of Atlanta within 24 hours of getting the information.
  - b) Please complete the following steps:
    - i. Call 1-888-437-0764 (24 hours a day) to file a report or

- ii. Call the Archbishop's Office at 404-920-7315 or 404-920-7550 so that the Archdiocese of Atlanta can be an active participant in cooperating with the appropriate state and local authorities. The report to the Archdiocese is NOT in lieu of the report to the appropriate state and local authorities.
- iii. Immediately fill out and return the form, "Report of Suspected Child Abuse by Archdiocesan Personnel." This form can be printed or submitted online. It is available at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/report/form.html>
- iv. the completed form can be mailed to:  
The Archbishop's Office,  
2401 Lake Park Dr., S.E.  
Smyrna, GA 30080  
in an envelope marked "Confidential,"  
or faxed to 404-920-7551 with a cover sheet.

### **When Should I call the Police/911?**

When you believe the child or vulnerable individual is in immediate danger or has been injured.

### **Are Volunteers Mandatory Reporters?**

Yes, volunteers as well as employees are included as Child Service Organization Personnel. For example, a volunteer at a church's children's service or nursery; a parent helping in a classroom or chaperoning on a field trip; or an individual coaching or supervising children at summer camp or weekend retreat, are all Mandatory Reporters under the Georgia Law. (Note, these are examples and do not constitute an exhaustive list of those volunteers who may be Mandatory Reporters).

### **Are Clergy Mandatory Reporters?**

A member of the clergy is deemed Mandatory Reporters. A priest shall not be required to report child abuse reported solely within the context of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When a priest receives information about child abuse from any other source, the priest shall comply with the reporting requirements specified above.

### **REMEMBER....**

When in DOUBT, report.