

## READ USA Policy on Reporting Suspected Child Abuse




Florida law requires that **ANY** person in Florida who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare **MUST** immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline - Department of Children and Families. The penalty for failing to report is a felony of the third degree. There are also financial penalties for failing to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

If you know or suspect that a child under the age of 18 is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of being abused or neglected, you are required to report that to the Florida Abuse Hotline.

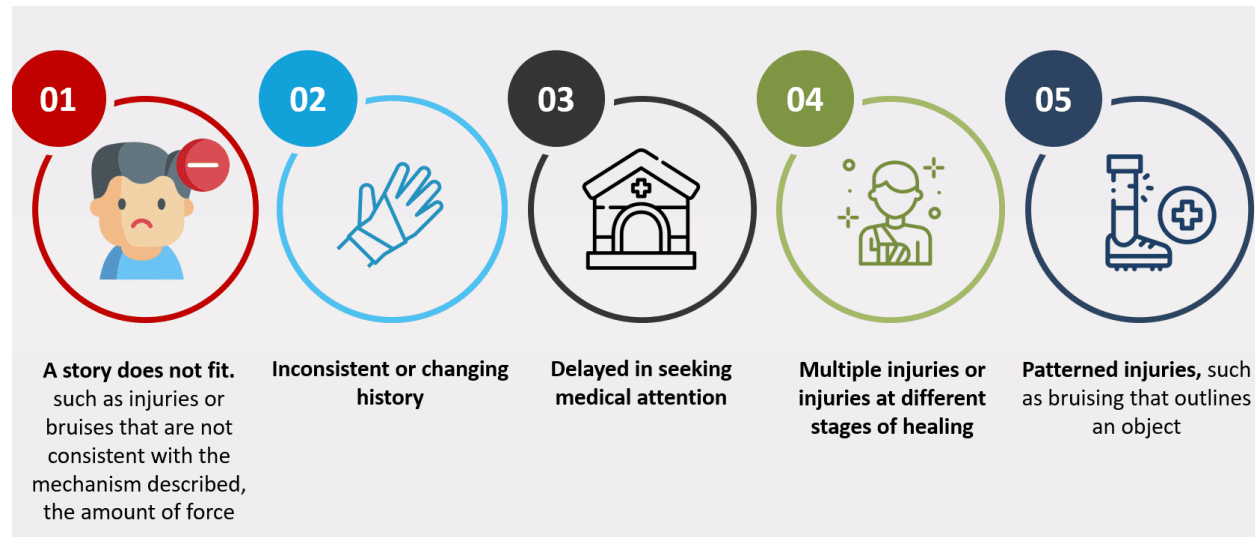
Remember, it is not your job to know whether abuse has occurred, IT IS YOUR JOB report your concerns.

### How to Make A Report:

1. **Telephone: 1-(800) 96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).** This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week with counselors waiting to help you.
2. **TDD: 1-(800) 453-5145**
3. **Fax: 1-(800) 914-0004**
4. **Online: <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>.**

 <p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unexplained injury</li> <li>Injury does not match the explanation</li> <li>Flinching</li> <li>Unwilling to cooperate with personal care</li> <li>Bruising in shape of object or finger marks</li> <li>Inappropriate clothing, e.g. sweater in summer</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Sexual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-harm</li> <li>Inappropriate sexual behaviour</li> <li>Sadness</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Loss of self-esteem</li> <li>Unusual vaginal, anal or oral discharge</li> <li>Unforeseen pregnancy</li> <li>Sexually transmitted infections</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Neglect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unusual weight loss</li> <li>Dehydration</li> <li>Malnutrition</li> <li>Untreated physical problems</li> <li>Unsanitary or unsafe living conditions</li> <li>Unsuitable clothing for the weather</li> <li>Abandonment of child in a public place</li> </ul>
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## RED FLAGS:



If you are wavering on whether abuse, neglect, or abandonment has occurred, **report and allow the Hotline to determine if the information meets the statutory requirements for acceptance.**

To minimize interference with the investigation, do not investigate or interrogate the child or alleged abuser. Interrogating the child may increase the possibility of the child retracting the story.

All reports of child abuse and neglect are confidential and access to these reports is limited (s. 39.202, F.S.). The department will only release the reporter name or other identifying information to DCF employees responsible for investigations, the abuse hotline, law enforcement, child protection team, or state attorney, without the written consent of the person reporting. If the child protective investigator needs more information, he or she can contact the reporter.

### What Happens If You Do Not Report

Professionally mandated reporters are subject to **serious consequences if they do not report**. A professionally mandated reporter who fails to report **can be found guilty of a third-degree felony (s. 39.205(1), F.S.)**. The penalty for a third-degree felony could be up to **five years in jail, a fine of up to \$5000, or both**. In addition to these criminal penalties, failing to report may result in a lawsuit in civil court for monetary damages for any harm caused by the professionally mandated reporter's failure to make the report to the Hotline, including wrongful death suits.



### **Good Faith vs. False Reporting**

Florida Statute protects mandated reporters AS LONG AS the report was made in good faith. If you DO make a "good faith" report of suspected abuse, you **have immunity from civil or criminal penalties**, even if it turns out that no abuse or neglect occurred.

**Good faith** means that **you have enough cause to suspect or believe that a child is being abused**. You **DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW** whether abuse occurred. However, if you make **a false report knowingly and willfully**, you may be **charged with a 3rd-degree felony**. This can result in a fine and imprisonment if convicted.

All personnel working for READ USA must take the following course. Please send certificate of completion to:

[Professionally Mandated Reporter - Overview \(usf.edu\)](https://usf.edu)

I certify that I completed the course "Professionally Mandated Reporter" as listed above. I scored 80% or above, and I have uploaded my certificate to the CANVAS link for **READ USA Personnel and Tutor Module: Mandatory Reporting**.

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Personnel printed name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Personnel Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assigned Elementary School:

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Site Lead Teacher Name: