



Safe Environment Office

Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires all adults to comply with reporting responsibilities for any suspected abuse or neglect of minors and for any threats of school violence, whether or not designated as a mandatory reporter under Wisconsin law.

A volunteer in any program should discuss any concerns about sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, or neglect of a minor with their immediate supervisor (such as a DRE or teacher), and collaborate together in making a report to local law enforcement officials or to local child protective service agencies. A volunteer is able to directly report to law enforcement or child protective services, if appropriate.

Clergy and paid personnel should directly report to local law enforcement officials or child protective service agencies. They should also notify a supervisor (such as a pastor or principal) that a report is being made.

Immediately upon notification to authorities, one of the following Archdiocesan Central Offices must be contacted:

- Safe Environment Coordinator - 414-769-3449
- Office for Schools - 414-758-2256
- Victim Assistance Coordinator - 414-758-2232

Important information to know as a mandated reporter:

- Reporting must occur immediately once a problem is suspected.
- Failure to report may incur legal penalties.
- Illegal behaviors or threats of school violence should be referred to law enforcement officials.
- Concerns about a child's welfare in his or her own home are usually best referred to child protection agencies.
- The State provides immunity for any professional who reports suspected abuse.
- The law does not require absolute proof of abuse. "Good faith" is presumed of any person reporting.

In the state of Wisconsin, minors under the age of eighteen may not consent to sexual intercourse or any form of sexual contact and it is unlawful for an adult to engage in any sexual activity with a minor. Wisconsin laws define sexual contact as any contact of a sexual nature between two people (clothed or unclothed).

Exposing minors to pornography, sexting or soliciting minors for sexual activity is also illegal. All such behaviors should be reported to law enforcement officials (rather than to child protective service agencies). This may include sexual abuse by one student toward another as well as between adults and minors. On the following page is a listing of phone numbers for child protective service agencies within each of the ten counties served by the archdiocese.

Complete information for all child protective service agencies in Wisconsin is available at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/reportabuse>.



Contact Information for Child Protective Service Agencies by County

Dodge County Human Services and Health Department 920-386-3750 or after hours 920-887-6713	Racine County Human Services Department 262-638-7720 24 hour service
Fond Du Lac County Department of Social Services 920-929-3400 or after hours 920-906-5555	Sheboygan County Health and Human Services Department 920-459-3207 or after hours 920-459-3111
Kenosha County Department of Human Services 262-697-4500 or after hours 262-657-7188	Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services 262-741-3200 or after hours 1-800-365-1587
Milwaukee County Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services 414-220-SAFE(7233) 24 hour service	Washington County Human Services Department 262-335-4888 or after hours 262-365-6565
Ozaukee County Department of Human Services 262-238-8200 or after hours 262-238-8436	Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services 262-548-7212 or after hours (262) 547-3388

Also available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/reportabuse>

Receiving Disclosures of Sexual Abuse from Children

Do...

1. Practice your response before you are in the real situation.
2. Pay attention to your body language. Give the child a signal that you are hearing what she/he says and that you can help.
3. Let the child describe what happened in his or her own words. Ask open ended questions (e.g., "Tell me about that").
4. Gather only the minimum amount of information necessary to meet the threshold of reasonable suspicion.
5. Maintain a calm demeanor. Avoid showing embarrassment, disgust, anger or shock. Let the child know it was brave to share something about a difficult subject.
6. Believe the child. It is damaging for a child who is telling the truth to not be believed, and false reporting is uncommon. It is the responsibility of investigators to determine if abuse has occurred.
7. Reassure the child. Children may feel ashamed or less loveable because of the abuse. Tell the child "What happened was not your fault and I'm glad you told me".
8. Tell the child you will do everything you can to protect him/her. Be honest with the child about your requirement to respond and about the steps you will take.

Do NOT...

1. Try to determine for yourself if the allegation is valid or invalid. This is the role of law enforcement and Child Protective Services.
2. Try to talk a child out of what she/he is saying. If you are skeptical, do NOT express your doubts to the child. This is a task for investigators to sort through, and you can express your doubts to them.
3. Attempt to find out the details in a group of children. Sexual abuse is not an appropriate subject for classmates to discuss.
4. Suggest to a child that you think she/he may have been abused. This can be damaging and is problematic in cases in which abuse did happen but the information was elicited through the use of leading questions.
5. Gossip about these allegations to friends, colleagues, or other professionals. Follow strict rules about confidentiality and remember that legal processes may be entailed.