

I SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES (DFS) HOTLINE

Reporting Is Mandatory

Delaware law Title 16 DEL. C. **REQUIRES** that "any person, agency, organization, or entity who knows or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect shall make a report in accordance with § 904 of this title." This includes any person in the healing arts, including the Family Support workforce.

Using the Telephone Report Line or Online Reporting

The law states that "any report of child abuse or neglect required to be made under this chapter shall be made by contacting the Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families." **Report all emergency incidents of child abuse, neglect, or dependency immediately by calling the Report Line: 800-292-9582.**

What Happens When You Call?

The staff at the report line will talk with you to obtain as much information as possible about both the incident and the family. The goal is to be objective, not judgmental. You will also be asked about what you think should happen and the support that the family may need. If the report meets certain screening criteria, an investigation will be opened. The time frame for the investigation will depend on the urgency of the situation.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS WHO NEED A HAND

By ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help promote children's social and emotional well-being and prevent child maltreatment within families and communities. Consider what you can do as a Family Support Specialist. And when appropriate, refer your clients to 2-1-1 for Help Me Grow. 2-1-1's expert staff can help connect families with resources, including care, screening, and low-income services like Medicaid. **DFS also has tip sheets for parents that can be downloaded and shared. These focus on the six protective factors.**



**14 Tip Sheets — Strengthening Families; Managing Stress;
Dealing with Babies, Toddlers, and Teens ([English](#) and [Spanish](#))**

THE REPORT LINE: 800-292-9582

Due to very high call volumes, medical personnel and other professional reporters may use online reporting of nonemergency incidents of child abuse, neglect, or dependency. The [child abuse reporting page](#) allows a reporter to follow prompts to complete the process.

Family Support Specialists should also become familiar with all the [rules and regulations](#) surrounding suspected child abuse.

HELP FOR YOUR CLIENTS

Many resources are available to help prevent child abuse and to provide treatment to families. Family Support Specialists can help develop six key protective factors:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Social and emotional developmental well-being
- Concrete supports for parents