

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ By Montana law, all GFPS employees are **MANDATORY REPORTERS**.
- ◆ All GFPS employees must report to DPHHS if they know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected or abandoned.
- ◆ Regardless of who the perpetrator is thought to be, school staff must report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect to the Child Abuse Hotline
- ◆ If you think an act could be a crime, call the SRO or police immediately.
- ◆ If a GFPS employee is uncertain whether to report or to whom to report suspected child mistreatment, call the CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE.
- ◆ In addition to reporting to DPHHS, GFPS employees are expected to report their concerns to their principal or supervising administrator. Reporting to the principal or supervisor, however, does not replace the duty to report to DPHHS.
- ◆ If the suspected perpetrator is a GFPS staff member, you are directed by GFPS to notify a GFPS principal, supervisor, or other administrator immediately in addition to your mandatory reporting obligations.
- ◆ Document on the DPHHS Report Form.
- ◆ For more specific information, see Resource Information listed elsewhere in this pamphlet.

CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
1-866-820-5437

TO REPORT:

- **COLLECT SOME INFORMATION:**
 - Names and addresses of parents or caregivers;
 - The child's age;
 - The nature and extent of current and past injuries;
 - Any other information the reporter has that might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries, neglect or harm;
 - Any other information the reporter has that might be helpful in establishing the identity of the person or persons responsible; and
 - The facts that led the person to reporting.
- Document on the DPHHS Report Form. Documentation will serve as a record that you have fulfilled your responsibilities to report.
- **CALL 7 DAYS A WEEK, 24 HOURS A DAY:**
 - CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE**
 - 1-866-820-5437**
 - The call is answered by a trained Intake Specialist.
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** The names and any identifying information regarding the reporter are held confidential by DPHHS and are not released or disclosed by DPHHS unless a District Court Judge orders the release.
- **OTHER REPORTS:** In addition to reporting to DPHHS, GFPS employees are expected to also report their concerns to their principal or supervising administrator. Reporting to the principal or your supervisor, however, does not replace your duties to report to DPHHS.

OTHER RESOURCE INFORMATION:

- **Montana School Guidelines for the Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect:** <http://dphhs.mt.gov/publications/mtschoolguidelines.pdf>
- MCA 41-3-101—Declaration of policy: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-101.htm>
- MCA 41-3-102—Definitions: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-102.htm>
- MCA 41-3-201—Reports <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-201.htm>
- MCA 41-3-102—Immunity from liability: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-203.htm>
- MCA 41-3-205—Confidentiality disclosure exceptions: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-205.htm>
- MCA 41-3-207—Penalty for failure to report: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/41/3/41-3-207.htm>



*GREAT FALLS PUBLIC
SCHOOLS*

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT MANDATORY REPORTING GUIDELINES

**IMPORTANT
INFORMATION
FOR
ALL GFPS
EMPLOYEES**

CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE

1-866-820-5437

Department of Human Resources
406-268-6010
January, 2012

By Montana law, all GFPS employees are **MANDATORY REPORTERS**.

The MANDATORY REPORTING laws apply equally to ANY AND ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL, (including but not limited to):

- Administrators & Supervisors
- Aides & Assistants
- Bus Drivers
- Coaches
- Coordinators & Facilitators
- Counselors
- Craft Workers
- Crossing Guards
- Custodians
- Food Service Workers
- Librarians
- Medically Related Professionals
- Paraeducators
- School Psychologists
- Secretaries & Admin. Assistants
- Substitutes
- Teachers
- Techs
- Tutors
- Warehouse Drivers

When a mandatory reporter knows or has reasonable cause to suspect, as a result of information received in a professional or official capacity, that a child is abused or neglected by anyone regardless of whether the person suspected of causing the abuse or neglect is a parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare, they shall report the matter promptly to the Department of Public Health and Human Services. (MCA 41-3-201)

DESCRIPTION OF TERMS:

- **KNOWS OR HAS REASONABLE CAUSE TO SUSPECT:** You do not need to have first-hand knowledge and you do not have to have proof. You do not need to investigate. You must simply have information that leads you to believe that a child is abused or neglected.
 - ◇ KNOWS = Witness an event; sees or has actual proof
 - ◇ SUSPECTS = Reported by someone else to you; hearsay; suspicious concurrent events; etc.
- **AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION RECEIVED IN A PROFESSIONAL OR OFFICIAL CAPACITY:** If you receive information regarding the abuse or neglect of a child while at work or fulfilling your job duties, then you are required to report.
- **CHILD:** Any person under the age of 18.
- **ABUSE OR NEGLECT:**
 - ◇ Actual physical or psychological harm to a child;
 - ◇ Substantial risk of physical or psychological harm to a child; or
 - ◇ Abandonment
 - ◇ Examples:
 - * Physical, non-accidental injuries
⇒ Bruises, human hand marks, welts, cigarette burns, broken bones, abrasions, human bite marks, missing hair, swelling, etc.
 - * Extreme publically displayed verbal outbursts that belittle or intimidate; swearing at a child
 - * Extreme publically displayed harsh criticism of a child
 - * Threats to a child
 - * Sexual abuse of a child
⇒ Sexual assault, sexual intercourse, indecent exposure, incest, etc.
 - * Corrupting the child by teaching socially deviant patterns of behavior
 - * Committing acts of violence toward another person with a child present
 - * Leaving a child alone & unsupervised
 - * Truancy with other neglectful behavior
 - * Exposing a child to the criminal consumption, distribution or production of dangerous drugs
 - * Etc.

- **BY ANYONE:** It doesn't matter if the person suspected of the abuse is a parent or other person responsible for the welfare of the child. If you know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, you must report. DPHHS will decide if the report needs to be reported to the police. If you witness a crime, however, you should also call the police. Suspects could include:

- ◇ Parents or step-parents
- ◇ Boyfriends/girlfriends of parents
- ◇ Boyfriends/girlfriends of the victim
- ◇ Other family members; siblings
- ◇ Friends of the family; neighbors
- ◇ *School staff members
- ◇ Coaches
- ◇ Day care providers
- ◇ Church leaders
- ◇ Strangers
- ◇ Etc.

*** If the suspect you are reporting is a GFPS staff member, you are directed by GFPS to notify a GFPS principal, supervisor, or other administrator immediately in addition to your mandatory reporting obligations.**

“Thousands of children are alive and safe today because a principal or teacher or some other caring adult at school was sensitive to a particular child's behavior, was willing to observe and to listen, and then acted on that information by filing a report. Reporting by itself does not guarantee that a child will be protected from continued abuse; but the failure to report adds yet another layer of bitterness and betrayal to the suffering of an already betrayed child.”

National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1991