

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Q: What are the responsibilities of clergy to report **suspected child abuse**?

A: Chapter 232 of the Iowa Code establishes two classifications for reporting suspected child abuse. There are **mandatory** reporters and **permissive** reporters.

Mandatory reporters include:

1. Health practitioners
2. Social workers
3. Certified psychologists
4. Certain people affiliated with educational institutions, including licensed school employees, certified para-educators, holders of a coaching authorization issued under Iowa Code § 272.31 and instructors employed by community colleges
5. Operators of the following facilities or programs and their employees:
 - a. licensed child care centers
 - b. head start programs
 - c. health care facilities
 - d. registered child development homes
 - e. family development and self-sufficiency grant programs
 - f. healthy opportunities for parents to experience success – healthy families Iowa programs
 - g. substance abuse programs or facilities
 - h. department of human services institutions
 - i. juvenile detention and shelter care facilities
 - j. foster care facilities
 - k. mental health centers
 - l. providers of services to children funded under federally approved medical assistance home and community-based services waivers
6. Peace officers
7. Counselors and mental health professionals.

Everyone else is a permissive reporter.

- Clergy are permissive reporters unless they qualify as mandatory reporters because they come within one of the classifications listed above. Permissive reporters *may* but are not required to report instances of suspected child abuse.
- Permissive reporters may make reports by telephone “or otherwise” to the Iowa Department of Human Services. There is a state-wide toll-free number for making telephonic reports:

1-800-362-2178

If you report:

- If you do make a report and have reason to believe that immediate protection for the child is advisable, you must also make an oral report to an appropriate law enforcement agency. **This is a requirement, NOT AN OPTION, and applies even if you are a permissive reporter.**

- A person who makes a good faith report of suspected child abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability on account of making the report or participating in good faith in any judicial proceeding resulting from the report or relating to the subject matter of the report.