




Identification and Intervention

Dr. Andrew Graham
LPC, NCC, BCPCC



Each year in the United States, there are 12,000 court rulings pertaining to churches and parachurch ministries.

The number one reason?

- Abuse of Children



Mandated Reporters

- Every state has a child abuse reporting law that requires persons designated as mandatory reporters to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of child abuse.
- Ministers are mandatory reporters in many states. Ministers may face criminal and civil liability for failing to report child abuse.



Mandated Reporters

- Mandatory reporters under state law face possible criminal prosecution for failing to comply with their state's child abuse reporting law.
- Some courts have permitted child abuse victims to sue ministers for failing to report child abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Who are Mandated Reporters?
 - Day Care Worker
 - EMT
 - Hospital personnel
 - Health professional
 - Law Enforcement Officer

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Who are Mandated Reporters?
 - Mental Health Professional
 - Nurse
 - Physician
 - School Personnel
 - Social Worker

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Who are Mandated Reporters?
 - Ministers?

Ministers are not specifically enumerated in Florida statutes as Mandated Reporters but may be included with an “any person” designation.

Child Abuse and Neglect

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and Facts 1

Myth: It's only abuse if it's violent.

Fact: Physical abuse is just one type of child abuse. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and Facts 2

Myth: Only bad people abuse their children.

Fact: While it's easy to say that only "bad people" abuse their children, it's not always so black and white. Not all abusers are intentionally harming their children. Many have been victims of abuse themselves, and don't know any other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and Facts 3

Myth: Child abuse doesn't happen in “good” families.

Fact: Child abuse doesn't only happen in poor families or bad neighborhoods. It crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. Sometimes, families who seem to have it all from the outside are hiding a different story behind closed doors.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and Facts 4

Myth: Most child abusers are strangers.

Fact: While abuse by strangers does happen, most abusers are family members or others close to the family.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Myths and Facts 5

Myth: Abused children always grow up to be abusers.

Fact: It is true that abused children are more likely to repeat the cycle as adults, unconsciously repeating what they experienced as children. Many adult survivors of child abuse have a strong motivation to protect their children against what they went through and become excellent parents.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Physical Abuse

- Physical harm or injury to the child.
- May be the result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child, but not always. It can also result from severe discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Physical Abuse

- There is a big difference between using physical punishment to discipline and physical abuse.
- The point of disciplining children is to teach them right from wrong, not to make them live in fear.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Sexual Abuse

- Doesn't always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved.
- Sexual abuse usually occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust—most often close relatives.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Sexual Abuse

- The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward.
- They may worry that others won't believe them, will be angry with them, or that it will split their family apart.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Child Neglect

- Failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision.
- Sometimes because the caregiver is physically or mentally unable to care for a child; other times, alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Emotional Child Abuse

- Constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating a child.
- Calling names and making negative comparisons.
- Telling a child they are "no good," "worthless," "bad."
- Frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying.
- Ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving them the silent treatment.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Child Abuse: Emotional Child Abuse

- Limited physical contact with the child—no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection.
- Exposing the child to violence or the abuse of others, whether it be the abuse of a parent, a sibling, or even a pet.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Warning Signs: Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
- Always watchful as if waiting for something bad to happen.
- Injuries appear to have a pattern.
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Warning Signs: Sexual Abuse

- Trouble walking or sitting.
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior.
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Warning Signs: Sexual Abuse

- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
- An STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14.
- Runs away from home.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Warning Signs: Neglect

- Clothes are filthy or inappropriate for the weather.
- Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor).
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments.
- Is frequently late or missing from school.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Warning Signs: Emotional Abuse

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
- Shows extremes in behavior.
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, throwing tantrums).

Child Abuse and Neglect

Providing Intervention!

Avoid denial and remain calm.

- A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down. As hard as it may be, remain as calm and reassuring as you can.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Providing Intervention!

Don't interrogate.

- Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't interrogate the child or ask leading questions. This may confuse and fluster the child and make it harder for them to continue their story.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Providing Intervention!

Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong.

- It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse. Reassure him or her that you take what is said seriously, and that it is not the child's fault.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Providing Intervention!

Safety comes first.

- If you feel that your safety or the safety of the child would be threatened if you try to intervene, leave it to the professionals. You may be able to provide more support later after the initial professional intervention.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

If you suspect a child is being abused, it's critical to get them the help he or she needs. Reporting child abuse seems so official. Many people are reluctant to get involved in other families' lives.

Understanding some of the myths behind reporting may help put your mind at ease if you need to report child abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Myth 1

- **I don't want to interfere in someone else's family.**

The effects of child abuse are lifelong, affecting future relationships, self-esteem, and sadly putting even more children at risk of abuse as the cycle continues. Help break the cycle of child abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Myth 2

- **What if I break up someone's home?**

The priority in child protective services is keeping children in the home. A child abuse report does not mean a child is automatically removed from the home - unless the child is clearly in danger. Support such as parenting classes, anger management or other resources may be offered first to parents if safe for the child.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Myth 3

- **They will know it was me who called.**

Reporting is anonymous. In most places, you do not have to give your name when you report child abuse. The child abuser cannot find out who made the report of child abuse.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Myth 4

- **It won't make a difference what I have to say.**

If you have a gut feeling that something is wrong, it is better to be safe than sorry. Even if you don't see the whole picture, others may have noticed as well, and a pattern can help identify child abuse that might have otherwise slipped through the cracks.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Tips for Making the Report

- Be as specific as you can.
- But remember that it is not your job to "prove" abuse or neglect. If suspicions are all you have, you should report those as well.
- Understand that you may not learn of the outcome.
- If you see future incidences, continue to call and report them.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: Tips for Making the Report

- Even if you make a report anonymously, write down the date/time of the call, who you spoke too and what was reported.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Child abuse
 - “any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions.”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Neglect
 - “when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Who is considered a child?
 - “A child is an unmarried person who is born, under the age of 18, and who has not been emancipated by order of the court.”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- What should be done if you suspect abuse or neglect?
 - “Everyone, including professionally mandatory reporters, should contact the Florida Abuse Hotline when they know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child or a vulnerable adult has been abused, abandoned, neglected, or exploited. The Abuse Hotline Counselor will determine if the information provided meets legal requirements to accept a report for investigation.”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- What information will be needed for the report?
 - “Specific descriptions of the incident(s) or the circumstances contributing to the risk of harm, including who was involved, what occurred, when and where it occurred, why it happened, the extent of any injuries sustained, what the victim(s) said happened, and any other pertinent information are very important.”

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- What information will be needed for the report?
 - Name, approximate age, race, and gender.
 - Addresses or another means to locate the subjects of the report.
 - Information regarding disabilities of the victims.
 - Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child.
 - Potential risks to the investigator.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- What information will be needed for the report?
 - Specifics of the incident being reported.
 - What happened to the victim?
 - Who caused the harm?
 - What were the affects to the victim?
 - Any known history, frequency, etc. of the same or similar incidents.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Children and Families: Florida

- Will the person know who made the report?
 - No
- Can reports be made anonymously?
 - Yes*
- Are reports recorded?
 - Yes

Child Abuse and Neglect

Counseling Treatment Modalities

- Play Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Journaling
- Individual counseling
- Family counseling
- Group counseling

Resources

Childhood Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing, Preventing and Reporting Child Abuse .
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm

Child Abuse Reporting Laws for Churches: Annual 50-State Review
<http://www.churchlawandtax.com/cltr/2013/july-august/2013-child-abuse-reporting-laws-for-churches.html>

Florida Department of Children and Families
<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/frequently-asked-questions>

Florida Statutes 39.201
<http://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2011/39.201>