



Providing a safe environment for the children of our diocese is a prime concern of these guidelines. The children are treasures of our families and of our church. They are gifts from God that we are called to protect and to enable them to develop into their full potential as God sees in them. As a diocese we are committed to provide a healthy, loving and an up building environment for the children we are forming, along with their parents, into the future adults of our church and society. We owe this to the children.

+Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre
Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux

DIOCESE OF HOUMA-THIBODAUX
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A Safe Environment
for the Protection of Children
and Young People

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF MINORS



**GUIDELINES FOR CLERGY, STAFF
AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE
DIOCESE OF HOUMA-THIBODAUX**



HOW IS ABUSE DEFINED?

Abuse refers to an intentional act committed by a person in a position of trust which harms or threatens to harm a minor's physical or mental welfare.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR BASIC TYPES OF ABUSE?

- ◇ **Physical Abuse** occurs when an adult injures a child and it is not an accident.
 - ◇ **Neglect** is any maltreatment or negligence that harms a child's welfare or safety.
 - ◇ **Emotional Abuse** occurs when an adult subjects a child to verbal assault or emotional cruelty.
 - ◇ **Sexual Abuse** involves sexual contact between a child and an adult or significantly older, more powerful person.
- This may include direct sexual contact as well as other exploitive behaviors such as:
- inappropriate verbal stimulation;
 - taking or showing sexually explicit photographs of or to a child or youth;
 - Exposing a child or youth to pornography or adult sexual activity.

WHAT IS A MANDATED REPORTER?

Louisiana State law requires the reporting of suspected abuse if there is reasonable cause to believe/suspect that abuse has occurred. Professions that must report in the state of Louisiana are clergy, health care professionals, mental health professionals, social work professionals, education/child care professionals. Teachers and/or child care providers, now includes anyone who "assists in teaching" of a child as well as the bus driver, coach, professor, technical or vocational instructor, school staff member, college or university administrator, and college or university staff member whether the person in "in a volunteer or professional capacity." In other words, all volunteers are included. Organizational or youth activity providers which means "any person who provides organized activities for children, including administrators, employees, or volunteers of any day camp, summer camp, youth center, or youth recreation program or other organization that provides organized activities for children. Also law enforcement professionals and commercial film and photographic print processors.

The obligation to report now goes beyond the work day to all times!

WHAT TO DO?

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected, and that the abuse is by a parent or caretaker, call your local Office of Community Services immediately. If you believe the abuse is by someone else, then call your local police or sheriff. Telephone numbers for the OCS in the four civil parishes that comprise the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux are as follows:

Jefferson	504-838-5357
Lafourche	985-447-0945
St. Mary	337-828-5278
Terrebonne	985-857-3630

LA Dept. of Children & Family Services
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
1-855-452-5437

Be sure that you have as much information about the victim as possible including:

- * Name, address, age, sex, race of child
- * Name of parent or guardian
- * Telephone number
- * Nature, extent or cause of child's injuries or endangered condition
- * Name, address and telephone of abuser if known.

If the alleged abuse involves Diocesan personnel - priests, deacons, teachers, employees or volunteers of schools or parishes-please call the **Diocesan Outreach Line (985) 873-0026**