Who are mandated reporters?

* Child service organization personnel’ means persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children.

O.C.G.A. 19-7-5(b)(5)

(This definition also applies to individuals who “volunteer” to be a mentor and are asked by or recognized by school staff to serve in that capacity.

What do I need to know?

A report is to be made immediately and in no case, later than 24 hours from the time there is a reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused.

Suspicion of abuse is all that is necessary to file a report. If you are not sure whether a report should be made, you should contact DFCS. The law protects you if you make a report in good faith. Not making a report is a criminal offense.

As a mandated reporter, what are the next steps I must take when I suspect abuse?

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, make an immediate direct report to the Department of Family Children Services (DFCS) by call 770-319-3739 or, after hours or on weekends/holidays, call 1-855-422-4453.

After making this call, notify the principal or staff member in charge of the program or facility as soon as possible that the report was made.

What if the child is in imminent danger?

Call 911!
TYPES OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse
The non-accidental physical injury of a child. Physical abuse is the most visible and widely recognized form of child abuse.
Indicators:
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Sexual Abuse
The exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child. Sexual abuse is most commonly perpetrated by an individual known to the victim, rarely is the offender a stranger. One-third of all sexual abuse is perpetrated by another child. Sexual abuse includes touching offenses: fondling, sodomy, rape; and non-touching offenses: child prostitution, indecent exposure and exhibitionism, utilizing the internet as a vehicle for exploitation.
Indicators:
- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted disease
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Neglect
The failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs.
Indicators:
- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Emotional Abuse
A pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth. It frequently occurs as verbal abuse, but can also include the following: rejection, terrorizing, shameful forms of punishment, withholding physical and emotional contact; developmentally inappropriate expectations.
Indicators:
- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Commercial Sexual Exploitation Of Children
When a child tells you that he or she has been abused, i.e. makes a disclosure, you should always take the statement seriously, regardless of how credible the child's statement seems.

Indirect Disclosures:
- There was no one home to help me with my homework.
- "I don’t like it when my mother leaves me alone with my uncle."
A child may talk in these terms because he or she hasn’t learned more specific vocabulary, feels ashamed or embarrassed, has promised not to tell, or for a combination of those reasons.

Indicators:
- Branding or tattooing: victims branded by their pimp with tattoos that include a male name or initials, street name, gang or money symbols; these are often found on legs, neck, chest, hands or arms (this is one of the ways that pimps maintain physical and psychological control over emotionally vulnerable girls)
- An older boyfriend or male friend or relative
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative
- Possession of large amounts of money (girls turn money over to the pimp)
- Poor personal hygiene and/or inappropriate dress
- Runaway or lack of adult supervision/support