

# **Indiana Legal Services, Inc**

Using the law to fight poverty, empower clients, and improve access to justice.

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## **Do I have to report suspected child abuse?**

In Indiana, any person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect has a duty to make a report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or to the police.

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### **Who has a duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect?**

In Indiana, any person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect has a duty to make a report to Child Protective Services (CPS) or to the police. "Reason to believe" means that the evidence available to that person, if presented to other individuals of similar background and training, would make those individuals think that the child was abused or neglected.

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### **How do I report suspected child abuse?**

If you have reason to believe a child is a victim of abuse or neglect, immediately call the Indiana State Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-800-5556. This number is answered 24-hours a day, seven days a week. If you cannot get through to this number for any reason, call your county's Child Protective Services Office (in the Office of Family and Children) or your local police.

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## **What if I don't report suspected child abuse?**

You could be charged with a crime. Any person who fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect may be charged with Failure to Report Child Abuse, a Class B misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine and up to 180 days in jail.

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## **Can I make my report without telling my name?**

Yes- state confidentiality laws protect your identity. Even if Child Protective Services (CPS) decides the child was not abused or neglected, the person you report cannot sue you. However, if you make your report in bad faith (that is, you know that the report is false), you may be charged with a Class A misdemeanor and may be held liable to the person you falsely accused. This does not mean that you must know that your report is accurate. You are only reporting suspected abuse or neglect and the law presumes that all such reports are made in good faith. CPS is responsible for determining whether abuse or neglect has actually occurred. However, you cannot make a report that you know is not true.

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## **What happens after I make my report?**

Child Protective Services (CPS) will determine whether child abuse or neglect has actually occurred. If you report that the child is in immediate danger of serious bodily harm, CPS will begin an on-site investigation within one hour. If you report abuse, but not that the child is in immediate danger, CPS will start its investigation within 24 hours. If you report neglect, but not that the child is in immediate danger, CPS will start its investigation within five days.

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Last revised: 2-2004

LSC Code: 1390099

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Printed: August 21, 2019

<http://www.indianalegalservices.org/node/20/do-i-have-report-suspected-child-abuse>

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