


# Reporting Potentially Missing or Abused Children

Policy 8462

# New Jersey Law under Title 9

- Defines child abuse and what constitutes different types of abuse
- Specifies that any person having reasonable cause to believe a child is subject to abuse must report it immediately to DYFS (SCR 1-877-NJABUSE)

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- Provides that a reporter acting in good faith is immune from liability
  - Stipulates that any person who knowingly fails to report a case of child abuse is subject to legal consequences as a disorderly person, and may be fined up to \$1,000.00 and or sentenced up to 6 months in jail



# Voorhees District Policy

The district policy is very much in keeping with the state law, but with a few additional requirements.

The Board of Education recognizes early detection as important in protecting the health, safety and welfare of all children. Please read the district policy. Here are some key points to keep in mind.

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1. The person reporting the abuse may **notify the building principal** or designee prior to reporting to DYFS if it will not delay notification, otherwise, notifies the principal immediately afterward.


**If the child is in immediate danger, call 911 and SCR - 1-877-NJABUSE.** (It is not required to notify the principal or designee if the person believes it could result in retaliation against the pupil or discrimination against the reporter)



2. The principal or designee will call the law enforcement authorities for all school employee, intern or volunteer reports.

School district staff must cooperate with DYFS and law enforcement authorities in all investigations. This includes scheduling interviews, providing records, or releasing the child to authorities.

The interview is conducted in the presence of the principal or designee, or if the student is intimidated by that person, the child may name a district person to accompany him/her in order to feel more comfortable during the interview.


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3. All information pertaining to allegation of abuse is considered strictly confidential and disclosed only to cooperate with investigations.
  4. There will be no reprisal against any person who reports in good faith.
  5. A district employee, intern or volunteer named as a suspect is entitled to due process rights.

# Definitions

**Abused child** – under 18, under custody or control of parent or other who inflicts or allows

- **Physical Abuse:** injury – not accidental, with substantial risk to life or function; include excessive corporal punishment, hitting, burning, shaking, or excessive physical restraint
- **Sexual Abuse** – inappropriate physical contact with child or exposing child to adult sexual activities
- **Emotional Abuse** – verbal abuse including belittling, embarrassing, threatening, or intimidating comments



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- **Neglect** – lack of supervision, inadequate food, clothing, medical attention or lack of love and nurturing
  - **Willful abandonment** of a child

There may be more than one type of abuse.

Indications of Abuse of Neglect may be based on observation, child complaint or report, caretaker or parent report.




## Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect


	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
PHYSICAL ABUSE	<p><b>Unexplained bruises and welts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On face, lips, mouth</li> <li>▪ On torso, back, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>▪ In various stages of healing</li> <li>▪ Cluster, forming regular patterns</li> <li>▪ Reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle)</li> <li>▪ On several different surface areas</li> <li>▪ Regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation</li> </ul> <p><b>Unexplained burns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks</li> <li>▪ Immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia)</li> <li>▪ Patterned like electric burner, iron, etc.</li> <li>▪ Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso</li> </ul> <p><b>Unexplained fractures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To skull, nose, facial structure</li> <li>▪ In various stages of healing</li> <li>▪ Multiple or spiral fractures</li> </ul> <p><b>Unexplained laceration or abrasions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To mouth, lips, gums, eyes</li> <li>▪ To external genitalia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wary of adult contacts</li> <li>▪ Apprehensive when other children cry</li> <li>▪ Behavioral extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Aggressiveness</li> <li>–Withdrawal</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Frightened of parents</li> <li>▪ Afraid to go home</li> <li>▪ Reports injury by parents</li> </ul>
PHYSICAL NEGLECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress</li> <li>▪ Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or long periods</li> <li>▪ Constant fatigue or listlessness</li> <li>▪ Unattended physical problems or medical needs</li> <li>▪ Abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begging, stealing food</li> <li>▪ Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)</li> <li>▪ Constantly falling asleep in class</li> <li>▪ Alcohol or drug abuse</li> <li>▪ Delinquency (e.g. thefts)</li> <li>▪ States there is no caregiver</li> </ul>
SEXUAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting</li> <li>▪ Torn, stained or bloody underclothing</li> <li>▪ Pain or itching in genital area</li> <li>▪ Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas</li> <li>▪ Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens</li> <li>▪ Pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unwilling to change for gym or participate in PE</li> <li>▪ Withdrawn, fantasy or infantile behavior</li> <li>▪ Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge</li> <li>▪ Poor peer relationships</li> <li>▪ Delinquent or run away</li> <li>▪ Reports sexual assault by caregiver</li> </ul>
EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructible, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, speech disorders, inhibition of play)</li> <li>▪ Psychoneurotic Reactions (hysteria, obsession, compulsion, phobias, hypochondria)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Behavior extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliant, passive    • Aggressive, demanding</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Overly adoptive behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriately adult    • Inappropriately infant</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Attempted Suicide</li> </ul>

*Click [here to download a copy of this chart.](#)*

# What we can do?

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse
- Be approachable and available to talk with the child
- Be a good listener – ask open ended questions such as “what happened?” rather than leading questions


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- Be supportive and reassure the child that he/she did the right thing, that he/she is not to blame, and that you want to help
  - Stay calm – the child could be frightened and intimidated if the adult reacts strongly, preventing him/her from telling what happened


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- Do not speak negatively about the suspected abuser in front of the child
  - Try to document your conversation as soon as possible, using the child's exact words as much as possible

# When Reporting: Call State Central Registry (SCR) 1-877-NJ-ABUSE


Provide as much information as you can

- Child's name, age, address
- Suspected abuser's name, relationship to child
- Description of suspected abuse and when it occurred
- Your concern for child's immediate safety
- Any knowledge of past abuse

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- Other witnesses, if known
  - Your name and phone number and relationship to child (allows DYFS to contact you if they have more questions- they keep your name confidential)
  - **You can call anonymously.**
  - If you are uncertain as to whether to report an incident, call **1-877-NJ-ABUSE** to speak to a screener.

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- After reporting, DYFS will investigate the report and determine if the child is in danger, and what if any action is warranted. Remember, **DYFS is the investigating agency, not us. Our responsibility is to report suspected abuse.**



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- The effects of child abuse can last a lifetime and contribute to other societal troubles. Children who are abused grow up and may abuse their children or others. Reporting child abuse can help break the cycle.
  - For further information:  
[www.nj.gov/dcf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf)



## TOLL-FREE HOTLINES

### Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline

**1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)**

**1-800-835-5510 (TTY/TDD)**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

Any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected has a legal responsibility to report it to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Calls can be made anonymously.

### Child Behavioral Health Services

**1-877-652-7624**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

Call this number to find out about services for children and teens with emotional and behavioral health care challenges and their families.

### Domestic Violence Hotline

**1-800-572-SAFE (7233)**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

Call this number for information about domestic violence services in your local area.

### Adoption Hotline

**1-800-99-ADOPT (992-3678)**

**9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday**

Share your love. Consider adopting a child into your family. Call to learn how you can change a child's life forever by becoming an adoptive parent.

### Division's Action Line

**1-800-331-DYFS (331-3937)**

**9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday**

This hotline provides easy access and a timely response to questions, concerns, disputes and recommendations regarding services provided by DYFS.

### Family Helpline

**1-800-THE-KIDS (843-5437)**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

If you're feeling stressed out, call to speak to a trained volunteer of Parents Anonymous who can provide support and refer you to resources in your community.

### Safe Haven Hotline

**1-877-839-2339**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

This hotline is for distressed parents who wish to give up an unwanted infant, 30 days or younger, anonymously. While no names or records are required, callers are encouraged to voluntarily provide information.

**2-1-1**

**[www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org)**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

This phone number connects callers to various human services in their community.

### Foster Home Recruitment Line

**1-877-NJ-FOSTER (653-6783)**

**9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday**

Many children in New Jersey need temporary homes until their parents are able to care for them or until a permanent home is found. Call to learn how you can open your heart and your home by becoming a foster parent.

### NJ Helps

**[www.njhelps.org](http://www.njhelps.org)**

At this web site you can find out about services and programs for children, families and individuals. You can also prescreen for eligibility for programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid and others.

*[Click here to download a copy of this chart.](#)*