

MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING

O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5

and

GA Code Ann., § 19-7-5



Governor Signs Amendment Expanding Mandated Reporter Laws

July 27, 2012

Free online course provides training for mandated reporters

Children in Georgia will be better protected from child abuse in the future as a new expanded mandated reporter law specifies a wider range of people being required to report suspected child abuse. Effective July 1, 2012, the mandated reporter law for Georgia has expanded to include more individuals that are law-bound to report suspected abuse. The new amendment designates several categories of individuals as mandated reporters, who “having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made.”

All child service organization personnel (both employees and volunteers) are now mandated reporters.

As this law expands, the need for employees and volunteers to be able to recognize and report any type of child abuse grows. The Governor’s Office for Children and Families (GOCF) sponsors a free, online training course, provided through ProSolutions Training, that details the law and its recent changes, discusses warning signs that can indicate if a child is being abused or neglected, and explains your role in reporting suspected child abuse. The hour long course can be accessed through the below link.

<https://www.gocftrainingonline.com/>

- ▶ O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 (2012)
- ▶ § 19-7-5. Reporting of child abuse; when mandated or authorized; content of report; to whom made; immunity from liability; report based upon privileged communication; penalty for failure to report
- ▶ (a) The purpose of this Code section is to provide for the protection of children whose health and welfare are adversely affected and further threatened by the conduct of those responsible for their care and protection. It is intended that the mandatory reporting of such cases will cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear on the situation in an effort to prevent further abuses, to protect and enhance the welfare of these children, and to preserve family life wherever possible. This Code section shall be liberally construed so as to carry out the purposes thereof.

Help Stop Child Abuse

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Abuse and neglect is defined as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. Abuse and neglect does NOT include the physical discipline of a child.

- ▶ **The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family, but a closer look at the situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination:**

- ▶ **The Child:**
- ▶ **Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance**
- ▶ **Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention**
- ▶ **Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes**
- ▶ **Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen**
- ▶ **Lacks adult supervision**
- ▶ **Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn**
- ▶ **Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home**
- ▶ **Reports abusive behavior**

- ▶ **The Parent:**
- ▶ **Shows little concern for the child**
- ▶ **Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home**
- ▶ **Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves**
- ▶ **Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome**
- ▶ **Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve**
- ▶ **Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs**

- ▶ **The Parent and Child:**
- ▶ **Rarely touch or look at each other**
- ▶ **Consider their relationship entirely negative**
- ▶ **State that they do not like each other**

WHAT IF THE CHILD DISCLOSES BEFORE I
CAN STOP THEM?

DO NOT ASK ANY QUESTIONS

THANK THEM FOR BEING BRAVE ENOUGH TO
TELL YOU

TELL THEM THAT IT IS NOT THEIR FAULT

TELL THEM THAT YOU MUST SHARE THIS WITH
ANOTHER TRUSTED ADULT

▶ **WHAT IF I'M WRONG???**

▶ **There is only harm in NOT telling.....**

▶ **Immunity is provided to reporters when the report was made in good faith and with concern for the child's well being.**

If you do suspect a child is being harmed, reporting your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family. ANY concerned person can report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. Some people – including doctors, clergy, teachers, police officers and anyone who works or volunteers at a child service organization like **Georgia Optimists** – are called mandatory reporters and are required by law to make a report of child maltreatment. -

▶ REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

- ▶ Reports must be made to the local DFCS office, but no later than within **24 hours when there is reasonable cause** of any suspected abuse
- ▶ Penalty for failure to report, if convicted, is a misdemeanor which could carry a fine and possible jail time.

- ▶ **To report child abuse and/or neglect:**
- ▶ **Please contact the local DFCS office in your county or the local police department.**
- ▶ **After hours (between 5 p.m. and 8:30 a.m.) call 1-855-GACHILD**



Kids stuck at school
during snow storm

▶ 11th Commandment

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