

## Wisconsin law defines abuse as:

**Physical Abuse:** Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. [Ref. § 48.02(1)(a), Stats.]. Physical injury includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm as defined in § 939.22(14). [Ref. § 48.02 (14g), Stats.]

**Neglect:** Failure, refusal or inability on the part of a caregiver, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical, or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child. [Ref. § 48.981 (1)(d), Stats.].

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual intercourse or sexual contact under § 940.225 (sexual assault), § 948.02 (sexual assault of a child), or § 948.025 (engaging in repeated acts of sexual assault of the same child). [Ref. § 48.02 (1)(b), Stats.]. Also including a violation of § 948.05 (sexual exploitation), permitting, allowing or encouraging child prostitution per § 944.30, a violation of § 948.055 (causing a child to view or listen to sexual activity), and a violation of § 948.10 (exposing genitals or pubic area).

**Emotional Damage:** Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, outward aggressive behavior, or a substantial and observable change in behavior, emotion or cognition that is not within the normal range for the child's age and development; for which the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to ameliorate the symptoms [Ref. § 48.02(gm) and (5j) Stats.].

Wisconsin statutes 48.981(2) & (3) require that any of the following persons who has reasonable cause to **suspect** that a child seen by the person in the course of professional duties has been abused or neglected or who has reason to believe that a child seen by the person in the course of their professional duties has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect of the child will occur, shall immediately inform by phone or in person the Door County Department of Social Services or a law enforcement agency:

- Physician
- coroner
- medical examiner
- nurse
- dentist
- chiropractor
- optometrist
- acupuncturist
- medical and mental health professionals
- social worker
- marriage and family therapist
- professional counselor
- public assistance worker
- school teachers, administrators, counselors
- mediator under §767.11
- child workers in any day care center, group home, or residential care center
- day care provider
- alcohol or other drug abuse counselor
- treatment staff employed by or working under contract with a county department
- physical therapist, physical therapist assistant
- occupational therapist
- dietitian
- speech-language pathologist
- audiologist
- emergency medical technician
- first responder
- police or law enforcement officers

*The department also receives reports of abuse or neglect from non-mandated individuals such as community members reporting in good faith. All reports are treated equally regardless of who reports.*



When making a report of suspected abuse or neglect to the department, you will be connected to an access worker who will ask a number of questions. Do not feel discouraged if you are unable to answer all of the questions that are asked of you. Tell us what you know. This information is utilized by the department in making decisions related to the severity of the abuse or neglect allegations and response times in initiating contact with the family. Following is a list of questions you may be asked by the access worker:

- ✓ Name, age, gender, race, and ethnicity of all members of the household and their relationships to the child and each other.
- ✓ Information that the child may be of American Indian heritage.
- ✓ The families address, phone number, the parent's place of employment, and the child's school or childcare.
- ✓ Presence of domestic violence in the home.

- ✓ Description of the abuse or neglect: current and past, surrounding circumstances, frequency.
- ✓ The child's injuries or condition as a result.
- ✓ The child's current location, functioning, special needs, and current vulnerability.
- ✓ How the family may respond to intervention by the agency.
- ✓ The reporters name, relationship to the family, motivation and source of information.
- ✓ The name and contact information of others with information regarding the child and family.
- ✓ The parent's current location, functioning, parenting practices, and views of the child.
- ✓ Description of family functioning, strengths and current stressors.
- ✓ Name of the alleged maltreater, their relationship to the child and access to the child over the next five days.

In instances where the primary caregiver is not the maltreater, the access worker may ask the reporter of any knowledge surrounding the caregiver's involvement in or knowledge of the child abuse or neglect and any action they may or may not have taken to protect the child.



### **What happens next?**

Within 24 hours of receiving a report, the department must determine if the report meets the statutory guidelines for a child abuse or neglect referral and a screening and response time decision must be made. If the referral is "screened in", a Child Protective Services social worker is assigned and a diligent assessment into the referral begins. An assessment begins with interviewing the maltreated child(ren), sibling(s), non-maltreating adult, alleged maltreater, and any other relevant individuals to evaluate present and impending danger threats to child safety. Child safety is the social worker's main concern through the course of an assessment. If safety standards are not met and state statutes support the child is in immediate danger, the department then has the ability to pursue legal authority to control safety threats.

If at the time of the report the information does not meet the statutory guidelines for an abuse or neglect referral, the department may choose to close the case or offer voluntary services to the family.

### **Notification to Mandated Reporters**

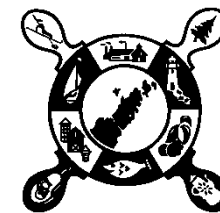
Within 60 days of receiving a report of suspected child abuse or neglect the county agency must inform the mandated reporter of what action, if any, was taken to protect the health and welfare of the child. [Ref. § 48.981(3)(c)(6), Stats.]

# **REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**



## **Door County Department of Human Services:**

### **Child Protective Services**



Door County Department of Human Services  
 421 Nebraska Street  
 Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235  
 Phone: 920-746-7155  
 Fax: 920-746-2355