

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee requires all adults to exercise reporting responsibilities for any suspected physical or sexual abuse of minors, whether or not designated as a mandatory reporter under Wisconsin law.

A volunteer in any program should discuss any concerns about sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, or neglect of a minor with their immediate supervisor (such as a DRE or teacher), and cooperate together in making a report to local law enforcement officials or local child protective service agencies.

Any paid personnel should engage in direct reporting to local law enforcement officials or child protective service agencies. They should notify their supervisor (such as a pastor or principal) that report is being made and seek consultation as needed. A pastor, parish director or principal must notify either the Director of Sexual Abuse Prevention & Response Services (SAPRS) at 414-758-2232 or Sue Nelson, Director of Academics and Faith Center of Excellence, at 414-758-2263 that a report has been made. In addition, the Director of SAPRS and Sue Nelson are available for consultation about reporting. Concerns about lack of cooperation or resistance to reporting should be taken to the pastor, principal, the Director of SAPRS or Sue Nelson.

The State provides immunity for any professional who reports suspected abuse. The law does not require absolute proof. The "good faith" of any person required to report is presumed. Reporting must occur promptly once a problem is suspected, and failure to report may incur legal penalties. Illegal behaviors should be referred to law enforcement officials; usually someone trained in handling sensitive crimes with children is available. Sexual assault and abuse are illegal behaviors. Concerns about a child's welfare in his or her own home are usually best referred to child protection agencies.

Sexual assault is defined as any kind of unwanted sexual contact or sexual intercourse with the clothed or unclothed intimate parts of another person's body without his or her consent. Under Wisconsin law, minors under age eighteen may not consent to sexual intercourse and minors under sixteen may not consent to sexual contact. While Wisconsin law is silent about whether a minor who is sixteen or seventeen may consent to sexual contact, any sexual contact with a minor by an adult in any ministerial role is unacceptable. Exposing minors to pornography or soliciting minors for sexual activity is also illegal. All such behaviors should be reported to law enforcement officials (rather than to child protective service agencies). This may include sexual abuse by one student toward another as well as between adults and minors.

Phone numbers of child protective service agencies for each of the ten counties served by the archdiocese is listed to the right or [review complete information for all child protective service agencies in Wisconsin](#).

September, 2008

Receiving Disclosures of Sexual Abuse From Children

Do...

1. Practice your response before you are in the real situation.
2. Pay attention to your body language. Give the child signal that you are hearing what she/he says and that you can help.
3. Let the child describe what happened in his or her own words. Ask open ended questions (e.g., "Tell me about that").
4. Gather only the minimum amount of information necessary to meet the threshold of reasonable suspicion.
5. Maintain a calm demeanor. Avoid showing embarrassment, disgust, anger or shock. Let the child know it was brave to share something about a difficult subject.
6. Believe the child. It is damaging for a child who is telling the truth to not be believed, and false reporting is uncommon. It is the responsibility of investigators to determine if abuse has occurred.
7. Reassure the child. Children may feel ashamed or less loveable because of the abuse. Tell the child "What happened was not your fault and I'm glad you told me".
8. Tell the child you will do everything you can to protect the child. Be honest with the child about your requirement to respond and about the steps you will take.

Don't...

1. Do NOT try to determine for yourself if the allegation is valid or invalid. This is the role of law enforcement and Child Protective Services.
2. Do NOT try to talk a child out of what she/he is saying. If you are skeptical, do NOT express your doubts to the child. This is a task for investigators to sort through, and you can express your doubts to them.
3. Do NOT attempt to find out the details in a group of children. Sexual abuse is not an appropriate subject for classmates to discuss.
4. Do NOT suggest to a child that you think she/he may have been abused. This can be damaging and is problematic in cases in which abuse did happen but the information was elicited through the use of leading questions.

5. Do NOT gossip about these allegations to friends, colleagues, or other professionals. Follow strict rules about confidentiality and remember that legal processes may be entailed.

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