

## **MANDATORY REPORTING OF ABUSE CHECKLIST (JUNE 2020)**

### **A. WHO NEEDS TO REPORT?**

In Florida, everyone is a mandatory reporter. However, there are two types of reporters:

- **Mandated Reporter (General):**
  - Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare is a mandatory reporter. § 39.201(1)(a).
  - Any person, including but not limited to state, county, or municipal criminal justice employees or law enforcement officers, who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable adult has been or is being abused, neglected, or exploited must make a report. § 415.1034(1)(a)5.
- **Mandated Reporter (Professional)**
  - Anyone who is legally obligated to report known abuse and must also identify themselves when reporting. These include:
    - Physician, osteopathic physician, medical examiner, chiropractic physician, nurse, paramedic, emergency medical technician, or hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of persons. §§ 39.201(1)(d)1 and 415.1034(1)(a)1;
    - Health or mental health professional other than listed in paragraph above;
    - Practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing, §§ 39.201(1)(d)3 and 415.1034(1)(a)3;
    - School teacher or other school official or personnel (child), § 39.201(1)(d)4;
    - Social worker, day care center worker, or other professional childcare, foster care, residential or institutional worker (child), § 39.201(1)(d)5;
    - Nursing home staff; assisted living facilities staff; adult day care center staff etc. (vulnerable adults), § 415.1034(1)(a)4;
    - Employees of Department of Business and Professional Regulation conducting inspections of public lodging establishments, § 415.1034(1)(a)6;
    - Law enforcement officer, §§ 39.201(1)(d)6 and 415.1034(1)(a)5; Judge, § 39.201(1)(d)(7) and 415.1034(1)(a)5; and

- **Mediators.** § 44.405(4)(a)3.
- Note: An officer or employee of the judicial branch is not required to again provide notice of reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect when that child is currently being investigated by the department, there is an existing dependency case, or the matter has previously been reported to the department, provided that there is reasonable cause to believe that the information is already known to the department. This paragraph applies only when the information has been provided to the officer or employee in the course of carrying out his or her official duties. § 39.201(1)(f)

## **B. WHAT NEEDS TO BE REPORTED?**

- **Child Abuse**
  - A child in need of supervision who has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult. § 39.201(1)(a).
  - A child abused by his or her parent, caregiver, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare. § 39.201(1)(a).
  - Child abuse by an adult other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare. § 39.201(1)(b).
  - Childhood sexual abuse or victim of a known or suspected juvenile sex offender. § 39.201(1)(c).
  - If the report contains information of an instance of known or suspected child abuse involving impregnation of a child under 16 years of age by a person 21 years of age or older, the report shall be made immediately to the appropriate county sheriff's office or other appropriate law enforcement agency. § 39.201(2)(e).
  - Reports involving surrendered newborn infants shall be made and received by the department. § 39.201(1)(g).
- **Sexual Battery**
  - Section 794.027 requires a person who observes a sexual battery and who has the ability to seek assistance for the victim without being exposed to a threat of physical violence must make a report. Someone other than the victim or a spouse or close family relative of the victim or offender who is not endangered and who fails to seek assistance by reporting the offense to a law enforcement officer is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

- **Vulnerable Adult Abuse**

- Section 415.1034(1)(a)5 states that any person, including, but not limited to any state, county, or municipal criminal justice employee or law enforcement officer, who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a vulnerable adult has been or is being abused, neglected, or exploited shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse hotline.

### **C. WHO DO YOU REPORT IT TO?**

- Child and adult abuse should be reported to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) through either the DCF statewide hotline (call 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) or through the DCF website at <http://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us>. The hotline also accepts faxes at 1-800-914-0004 and web-based chats on their website. § 39.201(2)(a).
- If the abuse is by an adult other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the report will be transferred by hotline staff to the appropriate county sheriff's office. § 39.201(2)(b).
- If the alleged abuse is by a juvenile or involves a child who is in the custody or protective supervision of the department, the report shall be transferred by the hotline to the county sheriff's office. § 39.201(2)(c)1.

### **D. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T REPORT?**

- Failure to report child abuse to DCF is a third-degree felony. § 39.205(1).
- Failure to report a sexual battery under § 749.027 is a misdemeanor of the first degree.
- Failure to report a case of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult or preventing someone else from doing so is a misdemeanor of the second degree. § 415.111(1).

### **E. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MAKE A FALSE REPORT?**

A person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report of child abuse, abandonment, neglect, or abuse of a vulnerable adult or who advises another to make a false report is guilty of a felony of the third degree. §§ 39.205(9), 415.111(5). However, anyone making a report who is acting in good faith is immune from any liability. §§ 39.205(9), 415.111(5)(b).