

APPROPRIATELY HANDLING DISCLOSURE: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Michigan Department of Education
in Cooperation with the Firecracker Foundation

WHAT DO I DO IF A STUDENT DISCLOSES
ABUSE, NEGLECT, HARRASSMENT, OR
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Be honest about being a mandatory reporter.

Step 1: Location

Step 2: Eye Contact

Step 3: Remain neutral facial expressions and tone

Step 4: Limit questions: "who", "what", "when" "where".

Step 5: "It took a lot of courage to tell me this."

Step 6: "You didn't do anything to deserve this."

Step 7: "I am here to listen and help any way I can."

Step 8: Help access resources to ensure safety.

HARM REDUCTION

- Financial/housing stability
- Immigration status
- Access to family members and support
- Estrangement from community
- Loss of relationship to the perpetrator
- Fear of retaliation, system involvement and/or safety planning for the survivor
- LGBTQ considerations - outing survivors and homelessness

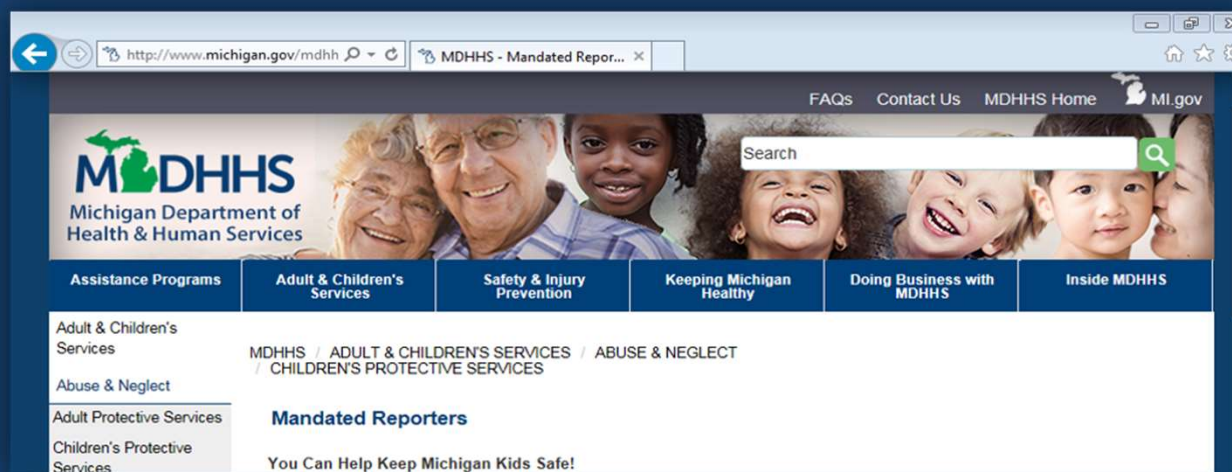
DURING DISCLOSURE, YOU SHOULD NEVER

- Start any sentence with “You shouldn’t have...”
- Question the survivor’s choices leading into the incident.
- Question why it wasn’t reported earlier.
- Encourage confrontation between involved parties.
- Dismiss a student without action (DHHS, Parent, Police).
- Refer them away from you without reporting and follow-up.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mandated Reporter resources are available online at:

www.Michigan.gov/mandatedreporter



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MANDATORY REPORTING

MCL 722.623 – the Child Protection Law

https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Adult-and-Childrens-Services/Abuse-and-Neglect/Forms-and-Publications/DHS-PUB-0003_167609_7.pdf

Teachers, school counselors, social workers, psychologists and school administrators are **required** to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect as mandated reporters

HOW DO I APPROPRIATELY FILE A REPORT?

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Mandated Reporters

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect/childrens/mandated-reporters>

1. Immediate oral report to the MDHHS – Centralized Intake (855-444-3911)
2. Written report within 72 hours

OR

Michigan Online Reporting System

https://newmibridges.michigan.gov/s/isd-landing-page?language=en_US

The reporter is not expected to investigate the matter, know the legal definitions of child abuse and neglect, or even know the name of the perpetrator.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN TO REPORT?

- The alleged victim is under 18 years of age.
- The alleged perpetrator is a parent, legal guardian or other person responsible for the child's health and welfare.
- The allegations minimally meet the child abuse and neglect definitions in the Child Protection Law.

REPORTING CONCERNS

- “I don’t want to interfere in someone’s family.”
 - *You may be the only person to intervene and ensure a child’s safety.*
- “They will know it was me who called.”
 - *Children’s Protective Services cannot provide this information without your permission or a court order.*
- “What I have to say won’t make a difference.”
 - *You may never know the difference you will make. Do the right thing anyway.*

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STATE LAW PROTECTIONS FOR REPORTERS

Immunity Protection

- Good faith

Confidentiality Protection

- Disclosure with consent
- Judicial order



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STATE LAW PENALTIES FOR NOT REPORTING

Criminal penalties

- 93 days in jail, or
- Not more than \$500 fine, or
- Both

Civil penalty

- Liable for injuries
- Liable for future loss/damages



WHAT IS THE CHILD ABUSE DEFINITION IN THE CHILD PROTECTION LAW?

"Child abuse" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.

WHAT IS THE CHILD NEGLECT DEFINITION IN THE CHILD PROTECTION LAW?

"Child neglect" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

(i) Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

(ii) Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES VIDEO – FEATURING WLNS SHARI JONES

- <https://youtu.be/qFrtr6ybHH8>

LET'S PRACTICE

- Find vignettes on the MDE website:
<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/Services/ed-serv/Educator-Conduct/michigan-code-of-educational-ethics>.
- How do you respond to the student sharing the information with you?
- What is your next step? Do you need to report? If so, what information will you provide.

SOMETIMES STUDENTS DON'T
DISCLOSE ABUSE AND NEGLECT.
WHAT SIGNS DO I LOOK FOR?

PHYSICAL NEGLECT - PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Unattended medical needs
- Lack of supervision
- Regular signs of hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene
- Distended stomach, emaciated
- Significant weight change

PHYSICAL NEGLECT - BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Regularly displays fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep in class
- Steals/hoards food, begs from classmates
- Reports that no caretaker is at home

PHYSICAL ABUSE - PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Unexplained bruises (in various stages of healing), welts, loop marks
- Adult/human bite marks
- Bald spots or missing clumps of hair
- Unexplained burns/scalds
- Unexplained fractures, skin lacerations/punctures or abrasions
- Swollen lips/chipped teeth
- Linear/parallel marks on cheeks and temple area
- Crescent-shaped bruising
- Puncture wounds
- Bruising behind the ears

PHYSICAL ABUSE - BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Self-destructive/self-mutilation
- Withdrawn and/or aggressive-behavior extremes
- Uncomfortable/skittish with physical contact
- Arrives at school late or stays late as if afraid to be at home
- Chronic runaway (adolescents)
- Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably
- Wears clothing inappropriate to weather, to cover body
- Lack of impulse control (e.g. inappropriate outbursts)

SEXUAL ABUSE - PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Pain or itching in genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Extreme or sudden weight change
- Pregnancy under 12 years of age

SEXUAL ABUSE - BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Withdrawal, chronic depression
- Sexual behaviors or references that are unusual for the child's age
- Seductive or promiscuous behavior
- Poor self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence
- Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)
- Hysteria, lack of emotional control

CREDITS

- Firecracker Foundation
- RAIN