



Duty to report

Under the **Child and Family Services Act in Ontario**, it is by law that people working with children are responsible for reporting suspicions of child abuse, not for providing whether or not child abuse has occurred. It is the responsibility of a child protection agency to investigate, with police if necessary, and decide on the best plan for the child.

- 1) Every person in Ontario, including someone who works with children, must call a child protection agency immediately to report his/her suspicion that a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse
- 2) The person who suspects that a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse must report to a child protection agency, and cannot ask anyone else to report it for them
- 3) If a person has more suspicions or information about a child, then a child protection agency must be contacted again, even if other reports have been made before *If you suspect that a child may have been abused or is at risk for abuse, it is not up to you to try and prove your suspicions. Trying to do so may contaminate, or ruin the investigation and may put the child at risk.

How old is a child in Ontario?

In Ontario, a person is a child from birth until their 16th birthday.

Protection from Liability

If a person reports suspected child abuse, they cannot be sued if it is proven that the report was made in good faith and not to cause trouble for anyone.

Failure to Report

If a person who has professional or official duties in their work with children does not report a suspicion of child abuse, then this person can be charged and fined up to \$1000. This shows that a child's safety is the most important thing.

Confidentiality

There are some relationships that are considered confidential, for example, between a doctor and patient, or between clergy and members of congregation. However, a confidence cannot be kept if child abuse is suspected. No matter what the relationship between people, one must always follow through on DUTY TO REPORT suspicions of child abuse. (Only exception to this is the lawyer-client relationship.)