

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse

Based on Tennessee Law

All members of the University community are responsible for compliance with Tennessee laws on mandatory reporting of child abuse and child sexual abuse. Please go to the following website to find detailed information from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services on how to identify and report child abuse and child sexual abuse: <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting.html>

University students placed in school districts should proactively ask the field experience and residency site for the school's child abuse coordinator and procedures for mandatory reporting. University students must adhere to these reporting structures when possible.

The following is a summary of key provisions of Tennessee law on mandatory reporting of child abuse and child sexual abuse.

Who Must Report

Tennessee law mandates reporting by **any person** who has knowledge of physical or mental harm to a child if: (1) the nature of the harm reasonably indicates it was caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect; or (2) on the basis of available information, the harm reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

Tennessee law also mandates reporting by **any person** who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, regardless of whether it appears the child has sustained an injury as a result of the abuse. The Tennessee mandatory reporting laws define a child as a person under 18 years of age.

How to Report

External Steps for Reporting

Call 911 if the situation is a life threatening emergency. In other cases, a report of child abuse or child sexual abuse must be made immediately to one of the following four authorities:

- The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (reports can be made by calling the Central Intake Child Abuse Hotline at 1-877-237-0004);
- The sheriff of the county where the child resides;
- The chief law enforcement official of the city where the child resides; or
- A judge having juvenile jurisdiction over the child.

Please note that University police departments are not included in the list of authorities. Reporting to University police, a supervisor, or any other University official or employee

does not satisfy and individual's duty to report child abuse or child sexual abuse to one of the authorities listed above.

Internal Steps for Informing

The following steps should be followed internally to keep all parties abreast of the reporting status:

- The University student should inform their immediate *University supervisor* or *department chair* of the intended report.
- The *University supervisor* or *department chair* should inform the Office of Educator Preparation of the intended report.
- The Office of Educator Preparation should inform the Associate Dean of Educator Preparation of the intended report.
- The Mandatory Reporting Team will determine next steps regarding any change in the student's placement given the context of the report.
- **Should the student need assistance in making the report, the student will work directly with the Mandatory Reporting Team.**