

Section 12 Reporting an Alleged Incident

While working or volunteering as a representative of the Diocese of Syracuse, it is your moral responsibility to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults from physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual assault, or neglect. The expectation is that you will report any disclosure or suspicion of physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual assault, or neglect to the appropriate civil authorities.

If there is an immediate danger, call 911.

**To report known or suspected neglect or abuse of a minor (under age 18),
call the New York State Child Abuse Hotline: 1.800.342.3720.**

**To report known or suspected neglect or abuse of a *vulnerable adult*,
call the Vulnerable Persons Central Register Hotline: 1.855.373.2122.**

If 911 and/or the Child Abuse/Vulnerable Adult hotline has been called regarding present or past sexual abuse or sexual assault allegedly by any clergy, religious, diocesan/parish employee or volunteer, contact the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 315.470.1465 who will initiate diocesan procedures.

How to Respond to a Disclosure

Listen

Listening is more important than talking.

Respond calmly; do not panic. Most disclosures are not emergencies.

Be patient; give your full attention allowing them time to tell you what happened.

Do not interrupt or voice any opinions.

Response

Reassure them that it was right to tell you what happened. Say: "I am glad you told me" or "It was very brave of you to tell."

Do not promise to keep it secret. Do not make promises.

Explain that in order for them to be safe you will need to share their story with someone who can help. "I am going to talk to someone who can help us."

Report

The following general information is needed to begin an investigation.

**Do not ask for additional information other than what is listed below.*

- Who is the alleged victim (name, address, age, parent/guardian contact information)?
- Who is the alleged offender?
- What is the abusive or neglectful act?
 - Details are not necessary; only basic information of the abusive/neglectful act is needed.
- When did the abuse happen?

- If this information is nonspecific or unavailable, call anyway.
- Where did the abuse happen?
 - If this information is nonspecific or unavailable, call anyway.

Other

You do not need to be 100% sure that abuse or neglect has occurred; you only need a reasonable suspicion.

Keep confidential notes about the contacts and all verbal/written correspondence that transpired.

Do not confront the alleged offender.

Do not inform the parent(s)/guardian. It may jeopardize the investigation or may put the child, young person, or vulnerable adult at risk.

If assistance is needed in reporting to the authorities, speak to the pastor, supervisor or the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 314.470.1465. However, you do not need permission to make a report.