



A Quick Reference Guide

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

I. Who Must Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect?

Under Trinidad and Tobago law, **every adult** is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse or neglect of a minor.

- Section 31 of the Sexual Offences Act, 1986 provides for the mandatory reporting of sexual offences against minors by certain persons. This sections states that:

(1) Any person who—

- a) is the parent or guardian of a minor
- b) has the actual custody, charge or control of a minor
- c) has temporary custody, care, charge or control of a minor for a special purpose, as his attendant employer or teacher, or in any other capacity,
- d) is a medical practitioner, or a registered nurse or midwife, and has performed a medical examination in respect of a minor, and who has reasonable grounds for believing that a sexual offence has been committed in respect of that minor, shall report the grounds for his belief to a police officer as soon as reasonably practicable.

II. Anyone serving the Church in Ministry and who either:

- (a) suspects that a minor is suffering from sexual abuse (including grooming and exposure to pornography) on the part of a member of the clergy, a religious, a lay employee or a volunteer, or
- (b) the clergy, a religious, a lay employee or a volunteer, or receives an allegation of such sexual abuse of a minor or a vulnerable person has an obligation to report to the Offices of the Delegate or Victim Assistance Coordinator or directly to the Archbishop.

In addition, every **school employee** is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse or neglect of a student age eighteen (18) years or older. (See Section I (c).)

III. How Do I Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect?

Emergency: If a person believes someone is in imminent danger of abuse or neglect, he or she should contact the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (CATT) to make a report:

1. State:

- **Call the Children's Authority Hotline:** 996 or 800-2014
- **Send a fax:** 625-4986
- **Email a report:** Registry@ttchildren.org
- **Mail a report:** 35A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

2. Church:

- **Email:** protectingchildren@catholictr.org
- **Phone:** (868) 622 1103

How do School Employees/Volunteers Report the Suspected Abuse of a Minor Student? If a person is a school employee and suspects a student, who is a minor, is a victim of abuse or neglect, he or she should immediately inform the Dean/Principal. The latter persons are responsible for informing the local law enforcement. The Principal should provide as much information as possible, however, a lack of information should not stop anyone from making a report as long as it can be made in good faith and with due care.

How do School Employees Report the Suspected Abuse of an Adult Student? If a person is a school employee and believes a student, who is eighteen (18) years or older, is a victim of abuse or neglect, he or she should inform the Principal who must report the matter to the local law enforcement.

How do All Other Adults (including Church personnel, employee, volunteer) Report the Suspected Abuse of a Minor? A person who suspects a minor is a victim of abuse or neglect should immediately call

- CATT hotline (See Section III:1)
- Report to the Archbishop's office (See Section III:2)

Suspected Abuse of Vulnerable Adult: If a person believes a vulnerable adult is a victim of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, he or she should contact the local Law enforcement.

IV. What if I Am Not Sure if I Should Make a Report?

In cases where :

1. the family is against reporting to the civil authorities, or
2. refuses to meet with the Delegate or Archbishop.

If either of these two cases occur or the complainant wishes to remain anonymous then the Delegate should take note of this as evidence. The Delegate has the responsibility of having this evidence notarized by an ecclesiastical Notary. Also, it must be noted that according to Civil law, the Church has an obligation to report the possible crime to the civil authorities.

If there is a refusal to report either to the Civil authorities or to the Archbishop or the Delegate(s), in Law, a complaint does not exist. If there is reasonable suspicion of a possible crime, it is the responsibility of the Archbishop or his Delegate(s) to do whatever is possible to bring such offense to justice.

*It is the recommendation of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain that this Guide be placed in accessible and prominent areas in each parish and archdiocesan school. Please consult the **“Policies & Procedures for the Protection of Children & Young People and Vulnerable Adults”** for more information.*