



Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect in Michigan: A Guide to Detailed Reporting

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Introduction

The Michigan Child Protection Law requires mandated reporters to report suspected child abuse and neglect by a parent/caregiver to Centralized Intake. Suspected abuse/neglect of a child by a person other than a parent/caregiver (teacher, coach, etc.) should be reported to law enforcement. Suspicion that a parent/caregiver has abused or neglected a child should be based on rational observations and professional training and experience. The following is a guide for what information, if known, is helpful to include in making a report to Centralized Intake. Please be as specific as possible about what was observed or heard that caused suspicion of abuse or neglect. Providing as much information as possible will enable Centralized Intake to make an informed decision as to whether the complaint meets criteria for investigation. When possible, always connect the family to available resources/supports even if a complaint of alleged abuse/neglect is still required.

General Guidelines

❖ In All Cases:

- Indicate any known history of abuse/neglect of the child.
- Indicate if you directly observed the alleged abuse/neglect or if the alleged child victim(s) disclosed the information to you. If the information was obtained indirectly, describe how and by whom the information was obtained. Do you consider the source reliable?
- Indicate when your specific concerns were observed or heard and the last time you saw the child.
- Indicate where the child is now and any immediate concerns regarding the safety of the child.
- Describe any known supports/resources that the family has or is utilizing to assist with challenges.
- Provide the family's address, if known. If the address is not known, be as specific as possible about the location of the family's home (city, street, cross streets, direction, landmarks, etc.). Include any known defining characteristics of the home (color, ranch, two-story, yard ornaments, vehicles, out buildings, etc.).
- If you do not have any information regarding the family's location, be specific about the place where you observed or heard of the concerning behavior.
- Indicate any additional information that may assist with locating the family members, including parent/caregiver work location, school or daycare location of the child, frequent places visited by the family (park, church, relative home, etc.).
- Provide the contact information of anyone that may be able to provide additional relevant information.

Physical Neglect

❖ Unsanitary or Unsafe Home

- Describe the conditions of the home using specific information, including when the home was observed. Words such as "dirty" or "filthy" are vague and have different meanings to different people.
- Describe what you see/smell/hear when you enter the home.
- Does the home have an odor?
- Are there working utilities in the home?
- Are there concerns about human waste disposal?
- Are there concerns with pets or infestations?
- Describe any health or safety hazards that are observed.
- Are there concerns about sleeping arrangements for the child in the home?

❖ Malnutrition

- Describe what you know regarding the child's accessibility to food in the home.
 - Is there currently food in the home? Are there concerns with the ability of the parent/caregiver to consistently access food?
 - Does the family have financial hardship?
 - Does the child complain of being hungry?
 - Is the family's food supply dependent on another person other than the parent/caregiver?

- Are there concerns with the child’s health or appearance due to lack of food and/or water?
- What efforts has the parent/caregiver made to consistently provide food for the child?

❖ Hygiene

- Describe what you know regarding the child’s hygiene/hygiene activities.
 - What are the specific concerns with the child’s hygiene? Are these concerns persistent?
 - Are there concerns about the child’s treatment by peers due to poor hygiene?
 - When did you last see the child?

❖ Utilities

- Describe what you know regarding the household utilities.
 - Does the home have electricity, heat, and running water? If no, how long has the family been without?
 - Describe the impact the lack of utilities has on the family’s ability to cook, store food, bathe.
 - What type of heat source does the family use (propane, natural gas, electric, wood, etc.)? Is an alternative heat source (stove, portable heater, etc.) being used? If so, are there safety concerns with this mechanism of heat?
 - Does the family have financial hardship?
 - Are there alternative plans in place that are addressing safety concerns associated with the lack of utilities? For example, are food and water being brought into the home by a support person, or is the family temporarily staying elsewhere, etc.?
 - Does the parent/caregiver have a plan to get the utilities restored? Has assistance been offered or explored?

Medical Neglect

❖ Medical Neglect

- Describe what you know regarding the child’s medical needs and the parent/caregiver’s efforts to address them.
 - Does the child have severe or significant injury that requires medical attention to sustain life or functionality?
 - Does the child have a diagnosed serious or life-threatening medical condition? If so, what steps has the parent/caregiver taken to address the condition?
 - Are there concerns with the parent/caregiver’s ability to provide life-sustaining medical care?
 - Has a medical professional recommended the child receive treatment? What are the consequences to the child’s life or wellbeing if such treatment is not provided? Has the parent expressed disagreement with the recommended treatment?
 - What is known about the child’s history of medical appointments? Are there concerns with the parent/caregiver’s ability to transport the child to medical appointments? Are there religious or other reasons that the parent/caregiver does not choose to have the child seen by medical providers?

Failure to Protect

❖ Failure to Protect

- Describe what you know regarding the parent/caregiver’s actions that present unreasonable risk to the child’s health or welfare.
 - Describe any known history of abuse/neglect of the child.
 - Describe your knowledge of the caregiver’s awareness of abuse/neglect or threatened harm to the child’s health or welfare.
 - What steps has the parent/caregiver taken to protect the child from abuse/neglect?
 - Is there concern that the parent/caregiver has threatened the child not to talk about abuse/neglect?
 - Describe what you know about the relationship between the parent/caregiver and the alleged perpetrator.

- Has the parent/caregiver allowed the alleged perpetrator to have access to the child despite knowing that the person poses a risk to the child’s health or welfare?

Improper Supervision

❖ Child Home Alone

- Describe what you know regarding the supervision for the child.
 - Is there a concern with the child being left unsupervised based on age and/or maturity level?
 - How often, when, and for how long is the child left home alone (days, evenings, night)?
 - Is there a plan of action for the child to take if an emergency arises while left unsupervised (call a relative, go to a neighbor’s home, etc.)? Are there concerns with this plan (no telephone in home, no plan in place)?
 - Does the family have financial hardship that impacts supervision?
 - Is the child providing care to other children? Are there concerns with the child’s age/ability to do so?
 - Is the child limited by disability or special needs that would prohibit or cause safety concerns for the child to care for him/herself unsupervised?
 - Is the child fearful, anxious, or distressed about being left unsupervised?
 - Is the lack of supervision a persistent concern?

❖ Domestic Violence (DV)

- Describe what you know regarding violence in the home.
 - Describe any known history of domestic violence in the home. Describe the relationship between those involved in the domestic violence. Do they reside together?
 - Are there concerns that substance abuse is/was a factor in the violence?
 - Provide details (who, where, when, etc.) about the instance(s) of violence that you observed or were made aware of. Was the child present and involved? Were weapons involved?
 - What strategies have been employed by the non-offending parent to keep the child safe? Are there concerns regarding the ability of the non-offending parent to keep the child safe?
 - Describe what is known about the perpetrator’s pattern of coercive control, including specific behaviors, frequency, severity, and adverse impacts on the child due to these behaviors.
 - Describe any injuries sustained by any household member as a result of the domestic violence.
 - Is there severe damage to the home/property resulting from a violence incident?
 - Are there concerns with the child’s behavior due to violence in the home (child cries, trembles, cowers, is fearful of going home, etc.)?
 - Have the police been contacted regarding violence in the home? Provide any known details regarding contact with law enforcement (arrests, Personal Protection Orders in place, police report numbers, etc.).

❖ Substance Abuse

- Describe what you know regarding the parent/caregiver’s use of substances.
 - What substances are being used by the parent/caregiver?
 - What are the circumstances of the substance use? If prescribed, is the parent/caregiver’s use of the substances in accordance with the instructions provided by the prescribing physician?
 - Describe how the parent/caregiver’s substance use affects his/her ability to care for the child.
 - Where is the child when the parent/caregiver is using substances? Is alternate care necessary and in place?
 - Describe how the parent’s substance use or activities related to substance use negatively impacts the child’s health and/or safety? Is the parent/caregiver allowing others to use substances in the home illegally or sell substances out of the home?
 - Does the child have access to the substances?

- Is there violence in the home?
- Is there a history of involvement by law enforcement due to substance abuse?

❖ Substance Exposed Newborn

- Describe what you know about the circumstances surrounding the newborn's health/condition.
 - What are the specific concerns for the health/safety of the child based on substance use/abuse?
 - Was the child tested for substances (urine, meconium, cord tissue, etc.)? If so, what were the results?
 - Does the child exhibit symptoms consistent with those resulting from exposure to a controlled substance? What are the symptoms?
 - Describe what you know about how the parent/caregiver's substance use affects the ability to care for the child. Are there concerns with discharging the child, such as preparations the parent(s) have made to meet the child's needs and ensure the child's safety? Do the parents/caregivers have adequate social support to assist with challenges?
 - What supports do the parents/caregivers have to care for the child?
 - Are there concerns with engagement of the other parent that indicate health/safety concerns for the child once taken home?
 - When will the newborn be ready for discharge?
 - Are there concerns with the parent/caregivers' ability to address health/safety concerns that the child may present with upon release from the hospital?
 - Was an Infant Plan of Safe Care established?
 - Who is the child's pediatrician? What is their contact information?

❖ Law Enforcement Home Raids

- Describe the details surrounding the raid by law enforcement.
 - What was the child's level of exposure to the raid? Were they present; did they witness directly?
 - What was the child's reaction to the raid?
 - Were the child or other involved participants aware of illegal activity in the home? If so, describe.
 - Include any known details regarding the raid (police report number, responding police department, search warrant, etc.).
 - What substances were found in the home during the raid and how much? Did the child have access to the substances?
 - Were there any weapons found in the home during the raid? If so, did the child have access?
 - What do you know about how the substance use impacted the parent/caregiver's ability to care for the child?
 - Describe any known history of past illegal activity, including arrests and/or warrants?

Abandonment

❖ Abandonment

- Describe what is known regarding the child's living arrangement.
 - How long has the child been in the care of their current parent/caregiver? What is the caregiver's relationship to the child?
 - What arrangement was made for the child's care by the parent/caregiver in their absence (power of attorney, guardianship, verbal agreement, etc.)?
 - Is the current caregiver willing to care for the child? Is their willingness time-limited?
 - Are there currently any unmet needs for the child (food, clothing, medical, school, etc.)? How are these directly impacting the child? Are there concerns with the parent/caregiver's ability to meet the child's needs?

- Are the whereabouts of the parent/caregiver known? Does the child and the child's current caregiver know how to reach the absent parent/caregiver(s) (cell phone, e-mail, social media, etc.)?
- If the child is with a caregiver other than the parent, is the parent still regularly involved?

Mental Injury

❖ Mental Injury

- Describe the child's injury.
 - Describe the parent/caregiver's behavior that resulted in mental injury to the child.
 - If more than one child is involved, are there differences in how the children are treated?
 - How long have these behaviors been occurring?
 - Are the concerning behaviors persistent; is there any pattern or triggers associated with the behaviors?
 - How does the parent/caregiver's concerning behavior impact the child? What signs of potential mental injury does the child display?
 - Has the child been diagnosed with a mental injury or condition? If so, by whom?
 - Is the child currently under the care of a mental health professional?

Sexual Abuse

❖ Sexual Abuse

- Describe what you know about suspected sexual abuse of the child.
 - What has the child done or said to make you suspect sexual abuse?
 - What is the relationship between the suspected perpetrator and the child?
 - Does the suspected perpetrator live in the home and/or have access to the child?
 - Describe the details of the suspected abuse (who, when, where, etc.)
 - Does the child display behaviors associated with potential sexual abuse?
 - Is the parent/caregiver aware of the abuse? If so, what actions have been taken to protect the child?
 - Has the parent/caregiver sought medical attention for the child? If so, provide the details and findings of the exam.
 - Has anyone with knowledge of the suspected sexual abuse contacted law enforcement? Provide any details regarding the involvement of law enforcement, including the agency and police report number, if known.

Human Trafficking

❖ Human Trafficking

- Describe what you know about the suspected trafficking of the child.
 - What specific trafficking are you concerned about (sex, labor)?
 - Describe any information you have about the alleged perpetrator of the trafficking. What is their relationship to the child? Do they reside with the child?
 - Describe the encounter with the child that led you to have concerns regarding trafficking.
 - Is the parent/caregiver aware that the child is a victim of trafficking?
 - What actions has the parent/caregiver taken to protect the child?
 - Does the child know the whereabouts of their parent/caregiver?
 - Is there evidence or concern that the child is part of a trafficking ring or large bust?
 - Where is the child currently?
 - Does the child self-identify as a victim of human trafficking?

Physical Abuse

❖ Physical Abuse

- Describe what you know regarding harm to the child.

- Describe the details of the physical harm to the child (who, when, where, etc.). Include circumstances surrounding the incident(s).
- Did anyone else witness the incident(s)?
- Describe the specific type of instrument or method used to injure the child (spanking, slapping, shoving, hitting, punching; with fist, hand, belt, hanger, utensil, etc.)
- Describe the impact to the child's body. Which part of the body is injured?
- Specifically describe the injury observed to the child (size, color, location, etc.).
- Was the injury accidental or non-accidental? How do you know?
- Are there other marks, bruises, welts, burns, etc. on the child that are not explainable?
- Did the child indicate pain that might suggest a non-observable internal injury?
- Was medical attention sought for the injury? If so, what was the outcome?
- Is the child exhibiting symptoms of physical abuse other than injury (change in behavior, fear of going home or of the alleged perpetrator)?
- Describe any concerns with the parent/caregiver that may be associated with alleged physical abuse (mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.).
- Is the alleged victim singled out for abuse/maltreatment?

Child Death

❖ Child Death

- Describe what you know regarding the circumstances of the child's death.
 - Describe any known history of abuse/neglect.
 - Describe the basis for suspecting the death was a result of abuse/neglect.
 - Was the child ill prior to death?
 - Describe any known history of substance abuse, mental health concerns, domestic violence, etc. that may be relevant to the death of the child.
 - Describe the involvement of law enforcement, EMS, etc. in the incident. Who was contacted? Was the child transported to the hospital? Which hospital? Did a crime scene re-enactment take place?
 - Describe the details surrounding the pronouncement of the child death (who, when, where, etc.).
 - Describe details associated with an autopsy. (Has one been completed, scheduled, etc.?)
 - Who is conducting the autopsy and what is their contact information?
 - If the death involves an infant under 12 months, are there concerns or evidence that the infant's sleeping environment was a factor in the child's death?
 - For deaths of children under 12 months of age, please indicate the following, if known: 1) does the mother smoke and did the mother smoke prenatally? 2) did the child test positive for drugs at the time of birth? 3) was infant in a safe sleeping environment? 4) is there history of drug/alcohol use during pregnancy? 5) was the infant breastfed?