

United Way of Greater Cleveland 2-1-1

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING CHILD AND ADULT ABUSE AND NEGLECT

(Revised February 2025)

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Under Ohio law, certain people are considered “mandatory reporters” and must report child abuse or neglect (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421>) to the local Children’s Protective Services (CPS) Agency. A “person engaged in social work” is a mandatory reporter. According to all material reviewed and past discussions with the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board, it appears that Community Resource Navigation is not considered Social Work. Community Resource Navigation Specialists (CRNS) are not mentioned in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) as mandatory reporters.

However, some people employed as CRN Specialists are Social Workers, Licensed Counselors, or other mandatory reporters. According to the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist Board, if you are using your license (placing it in your signature line in Outlook, for example), or representing yourself as a social worker, then you are a mandatory reporter. If you are unsure, err on the side of assuming you are a mandatory reporter and consult with your licensing board.

Mandatory reporters are not required to get more information than what has been provided to them. This is important to note for our work on an anonymous helpline. To report the abuse or neglect, you must have something more than a phone number. **You should have at minimum, a basic description of the situation, who the alleged perpetrator is and be able to state where the child is now.**

Ohio law provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for those who make reports of possible abuse or neglect. The identity of the reporter is kept confidential.

CPS agencies focus on specific harm being done to the child by a caretaker’s action or inaction. **A caretaker’s mental status, habits, etc., are an issue only to the extent that harm to the child or risk of harm is resulting from the caretaker’s actions or inactions.**

[ORC Section 2151.03](#) defines a neglected child as one:

- Who is abandoned by the child's parents, guardian, or custodian;
- Who lacks adequate parental care because of the faults or habits of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian;
- Whose parents, guardian, or custodian neglects the child or refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, education, medical or surgical care or treatment, or other care necessary for the child's health, morals, or well being;
- Whose parents, guardian, or custodian neglects the child or refuses to provide the special care made necessary by the child's mental condition;
- Whose parents, legal guardian, or custodian have placed or attempted to place the child in violation of sections [5103.16](#) and [5103.17](#) of the Ohio Revised Code;
- Who, because of the omission of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child's health or welfare;
- Who is subjected to out-of-home care child neglect.

[ORC Section 2151.031](#) defines an abused child as one whom:

- Is the victim of "sexual activity" as defined under [Chapter 2907](#). of the Revised Code, where such activity would constitute an offense under that chapter, except that the court need not find that any person has been convicted of the offense to find that the child is an abused child;
- Is the victim of disseminating, obtaining, or displaying "materials" or "performances" that are "harmful to juveniles" as defined under [Chapter 2907](#). of the Revised Code, where such activity would constitute an offense under that chapter, except that the court need not find that any person has been convicted of the offense to find that the child is an abused child;
- Is endangered as defined in section [2919.22](#) of the Revised Code, except that the court need not find that any person has been convicted under that section in order to find that the child is an abused child;
- Exhibits evidence of any physical or mental injury or death, inflicted other than by accidental means, or an injury or death which is at variance with the history given of it. Except as provided in division (E) of this section, a child exhibiting evidence of corporal punishment or other physical disciplinary measure by a parent, guardian, custodian, caretaker, person having custody or control, or person in loco parentis of a child is not an abused child under this division if the measure is not prohibited under section [2919.22](#) of the Revised Code.
- Because of the acts of his parents, guardian, or custodian, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child's health or welfare.
- Is subjected to out-of-home care child abuse

GUIDELINES FOR REFERRAL IN COMPLICATED SITUATIONS

Please note, this is for your guidance only and is based upon Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services' screening guidelines. If in doubt, please make a referral.

	Accepted as a referral for investigation?
Abuse by Stranger or Non-Relative	No, unless the parent is non-cooperative or is not protecting the child.
Lack of Utilities	No, unless the lack of heat in the winter or water in the home (without access to alternative provisions), causes a threat to the child's health and safety, or there is a direct health threat due to the lack of electricity (e.g. child requires an apnea monitor).
Homelessness	No, unless homelessness is chronic, the parent's substance abuse is contributing to the problem or the children are not attending school, or are not receiving adequate nutrition and/or medical care.
Runaway	Yes, but if CPS determines that the child is not abused or neglected, the family will be referred to other community services. 2-1-1 Policy Note: There is no shelter for runaway children with children of their own. If you cannot get enough information from the caller to make a CPS referral OR If, when you call CPS, they determine the case you present is not appropriate for referral, you may provide the runaway with their local 24/hour runaway hotline number or a Safe Place (use the taxonomy: "community safe place").
Domestic Violence	Yes. Domestic violence in a home where children are present is considered a dangerous act.
Inadequate Supervision	Yes, if harm or potential harm to the child exists because he/she is left alone, or is out in the community unsupervised, or is supervised by an inappropriate caregiver. Many factors such as the length of time the child is left alone, the time of day and the maturity level of the child are significant in determining when children can be safely left alone.
Substance Abuse by Caretaker	No, unless the caretaker's drug abuse causes them to hurt their child and results in their being unable to provide adequate care for their child.

ADULT ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Ohio law provides for the protection of certain adults age 60 or older by providing for adult protective services and declaring certain people as mandatory reporters of adult abuse and neglect.

Under Ohio law (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/5101.61>), all “Senior Service Providers” (among other classifications) are mandatory reporters of adult abuse and neglect to the local Adult Protective Services (APS) authority. Based upon our services and funding, 2-1-1 appears to be a Senior Service Provider. Therefore, we will consider Information and Referral Specialists mandatory reporters.

Mandatory reporters are not required to get more information than what has been provided to them. This is important to note for our work on an anonymous helpline. In order to report the abuse or neglect, you must have something more than a phone number. **You should have at minimum, a basic description of what happened and be able to state the location of the adult.** Ohio law provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for those who make reports of possible abuse or neglect. The identity of the reporter is kept confidential.

According to [ORC 5161.03](#), reports should include:

- The name, address, and approximate age of the adult who is the subject of the report;
- The name and address of the individual responsible for the adult's care, if any individual is, and if the individual is known;
- The nature and extent of the alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation of the adult;
- The basis of the reporter's belief that the adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited.

ORC (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/5101.60>) defines an **adult** as:

Any person sixty years of age or older within this state who is disabled by the infirmities of aging or who has a physical or mental impairment which prevents the person from providing for the person's own care or protection, and who resides in an independent living arrangement.

An **independent living arrangement** is a domicile of a person's own choosing, including, but not limited to, a private home, apartment, trailer, or rooming house. "Independent living arrangement" includes a residential facility licensed under section 5119.22 of the Revised Code that provides accommodations, supervision, and personal care services for three to sixteen unrelated adults, but does not include any other institution or facility licensed by the state or a facility in which a person resides as a result of voluntary, civil, or criminal commitment. **2-1-1 Policy Note:** Residents of State-Licensed Nursing Homes must be referred to the Ohio Department of Health Complaint Hotline.

Any adult, as defined above, who is a victim or possible victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, self-neglect and/or exploitation, may be referred for protective services. Some APS authorities will also accept referrals for vulnerable or impaired adult under the age of 60. Please use Navigate as your guideline for whom to refer and under what circumstances.

ORC (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/5101.60>) defines abandonment, abuse, neglect and exploitation as follows:

Abandonment means desertion of an adult by a caretaker without having made provision for transfer of the adult's care.

Abuse means the infliction upon an adult by self or others of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical harm, pain, or mental anguish.

Exploitation means the unlawful or improper act of a person using, in one or more transactions, an adult or an adult's resources for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain when the person obtained or exerted control over the adult or the adult's resources in any of the following ways:

- Without the adult's consent or the consent of the person authorized to give consent on the adult's behalf;
- Beyond the scope of the express or implied consent of the adult or the person authorized to give consent on the adult's behalf;
- By deception;
- By threat;
- By intimidation.

Neglect means the failure of an adult to provide for self the goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish, or mental illness or the failure of a caretaker to provide such goods or services. Abandonment is also neglect. Lack of utilities may be a form of neglect or self-neglect. For example, if the lack of heat in the winter or water in the home (without access to alternative provisions), causes a threat to the adult's health and safety, or there is a direct health threat due to the lack of electricity (e.g. adult requires a breathing apparatus), this should be referred to APS for assessment if no other solution can be found.