



# Penalties for Failure to Report and False Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Many cases of child abuse and neglect are not reported, even when mandated by law. Therefore, nearly every State and U.S. territory imposes penalties, often in the form of a fine or imprisonment, on mandatory reporters who fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect as required by law.<sup>1</sup> In addition, to prevent malicious or intentional reporting of cases that are not founded, many States and the U.S. Virgin Islands impose penalties against any person who files a report known to be false.

<sup>1</sup> See Child Welfare Information Gateway's *Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect* at [http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/manda.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.cfm).

To find statute information for a particular State, go to [http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/state/index.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/index.cfm)

## Penalties for Failure to Report

Approximately 47 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands impose penalties on mandatory reporters who knowingly or willfully fail to make a report when they suspect that a child is being abused or neglected.<sup>2</sup> In Florida, a mandatory reporter who fails to report as required by law can be charged with a felony. Failure to report is classified as a misdemeanor or a similar charge in 38 States and American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.<sup>3</sup> In Arizona and Minnesota, misdemeanors are upgraded to felonies for failure to report more serious situations, while in Illinois and Guam, second or subsequent violations are classified as felonies.

Twenty States and the District of Columbia, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands specify in the reporting laws the penalties for failure to report.<sup>4</sup> Upon conviction, a mandated reporter who fails to report can face jail terms ranging from 30 days to 5 years, fines ranging from \$300 to \$10,000, or both jail terms and fines. In six States, harsher penalties may be imposed under certain circumstances.<sup>5</sup> In seven States and American Samoa, in addition to any criminal penalties, the reporter may be civilly liable for any damages caused by the failure to report.<sup>6</sup>

Florida imposes a fine of up to \$1 million on an institution of higher learning, including any State university and nonpublic

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<sup>2</sup> The word *approximately* is used to stress the fact that the States frequently amend their laws. This information is current through August 2012. Maryland, North Carolina, Wyoming, and Puerto Rico currently do not have statutes imposing penalties for failure to report.

<sup>3</sup> Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey (charged as a disorderly person), New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

<sup>4</sup> Alabama, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

<sup>5</sup> In California and Massachusetts, harsher penalties are imposed when the failure to report results in the child's death or serious bodily injury. Louisiana imposes harsher penalties when the reporter fails to report sexual abuse or serious bodily injury. Delaware and Virginia impose harsher penalties upon second or subsequent convictions for failure to report. Vermont imposes its fine for failure to report when the reporter willfully failed to report with the intent to conceal the abuse.

<sup>6</sup> Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Montana, New York, and Rhode Island.

## Penalties for False Reporting

college, that fails to report, or prevents any person from reporting, an instance of abuse committed on the property of the institution or at an event sponsored by the institution.

Approximately 29 States carry penalties in their civil child protection laws for any person who willfully or intentionally makes a report of child abuse or neglect that the reporter knows to be false.<sup>7</sup> In New York, Ohio, and the Virgin Islands, making false reports of child maltreatment is made illegal in criminal sections of State code.

Nineteen States and the Virgin Islands classify false reporting as a misdemeanor or similar charge.<sup>8</sup> In Florida, Illinois, Tennessee, and Texas, false reporting is a felony, while in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Virginia, second or subsequent offenses are upgraded to felonies. In Michigan, false reporting can be either a misdemeanor or a felony, depending on the seriousness of the alleged abuse in the report. No criminal penalties are imposed in California, Maine, Montana, Minnesota, and Nebraska; however, immunity from civil or criminal action that is provided to reporters of abuse or neglect is not extended to those who make a false report.

Eleven States and the Virgin Islands specify the penalties for making a false report.<sup>9</sup> Upon conviction, the reporter can face jail terms ranging from 90 days to 5 years or fines ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. Florida imposes the most severe penalties: In addition to a court sentence of 5 years and \$5,000, the Department of Children and Family Services may fine the reporter up to \$10,000. In six States, the reporter may be civilly liable for any damages caused by the report.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>8</sup> Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>9</sup> Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>10</sup> California, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

This publication is a product of the State Statutes Series prepared by Child Welfare Information Gateway. While every attempt has been made to be complete, additional information on these topics may be in other sections of a State's code as well as agency regulations, case law, and informal practices and procedures.

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**Alabama****Failure to Report****Ala. Code § 26-14-13**

Any person who knowingly fails to make the report required by the reporting laws shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a sentence of no more than 6 months imprisonment or a fine of no more than \$500.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Alaska****Failure to Report****Alaska Stat. § 47.17.068**

A person who fails to comply with the laws requiring reports of child abuse or neglect or child pornography and who knew or should have known that the circumstances gave rise to the need for a report is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**American Samoa****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 45.2002(d)**

Any person who willfully violates the provisions of subsection (a) [requiring certain persons to report]:

- Commits a Class A misdemeanor
- Is liable for damages proximately caused

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Arizona****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 13-3620(O)**

A person who violates this section requiring the reporting of child abuse or neglect is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, except if the failure to report involves a reportable offense, in which case the person is guilty of a Class 6 felony.

**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. § 13-3620.01**

A person acting with malice who knowingly and intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or neglect, or a person acting with malice who coerces another person to make a false report of child abuse or neglect, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

A person who knowingly and intentionally makes a false report that another person made a false report is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

**Arkansas****Failure to Report****Ann. Code §§ 12-18-201; 12-18-202; 12-18-206**

A person commits the offense of failure to notify by a mandated reporter in the first degree if he or she:

- Is a mandated reporter under this chapter
- Has:
  - » Reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to child maltreatment
  - » Reasonable cause to suspect that a child has died as a result of child maltreatment
  - » Observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in child maltreatment
- Knowingly fails to notify the Child Abuse Hotline of the child maltreatment or suspected child maltreatment

Failure to notify by a mandated reporter in the first degree is a Class A misdemeanor.

A person commits the offense of failure to notify by a mandated reporter in the second degree if he or she:

- Is a mandated reporter under this chapter
- Has:
  - » Reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to child maltreatment
  - » Reasonable cause to suspect that a child has died as a result of child maltreatment
  - » Observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in child maltreatment
- Recklessly fails to notify the Child Abuse Hotline of the child maltreatment or suspected child maltreatment

Failure to notify by a mandated reporter in the second degree is a Class C misdemeanor.

A person required to make a report of child maltreatment or suspected child maltreatment to the Child Abuse Hotline who purposely fails to do so is civilly liable for damages proximately caused by that failure.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code § 12-18-203**

A person commits the offense of making a false report under this chapter if he or she purposely makes a report containing a false allegation to the Child Abuse Hotline knowing the allegation to be false.

A first offense of making a false report under this chapter is a Class A misdemeanor. A subsequent offense of making a false report under this chapter is a Class D felony.

**California****Failure to Report****Penal Code §§ 11166(c); 11166.01**

Any mandated reporter who fails to report an incident of known or reasonably suspected child abuse or neglect is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to 6 months in a county jail, by a fine of \$1,000, or both. If a mandated reporter intentionally conceals his or her failure to report an incident known by the mandated reporter to be abuse or severe neglect, the failure to report is a continuing offense until an agency specified in § 11165.9 discovers the offense.

Any supervisor or administrator who violates § 11166(1) [that prohibits impeding others from making a report], shall be punished by no more than 6 months in a county jail, by a fine of no more than \$1,000, or both.

Any mandated reporter who willfully fails to report abuse or neglect, or any person who impedes or inhibits a report of abuse or neglect, where that abuse or neglect results in death or great bodily injury, shall be punished by no more than 1 year in a county jail, by a fine of no more than \$5,000, or both.

**False Reporting****Penal Code § 11172(a)**

Any person reporting a known or suspected instance of child abuse or neglect shall not incur civil or criminal liability as a result of any report unless it can be proven that a false report was made and the person knew that the report was false or was made with reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of the report.

Any person who makes a report of child abuse or neglect known to be false or with reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of the report is liable for any damages caused.

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**Colorado****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 19-3-304(4)**

Any mandatory reporter who willfully fails to report as required by § 19-3-304(1):

- Commits a Class 3 misdemeanor and shall be punished as provided by law
- Shall be liable for damages proximately caused

**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. § 19-3-304(3.5), (4)**

No person, including a mandatory reporter, shall knowingly make a false report of abuse or neglect to a county department or local law enforcement agency.

Any person who violates this provision:

- Commits a Class 3 misdemeanor and shall be punished as provided by law
  - Shall be liable for damages proximately caused
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**Connecticut****Failure to Report****Gen. Stat. § 17a-101a**

Any person who is required to report who fails to make such report shall be:

- Fined no less than \$500 nor more than \$2,500
- Required to participate in an educational and training program pursuant to § 17a-101(d)

**False Reporting****Gen. Stat. § 17a-101e(c)**

Any person who knowingly makes a false report of child abuse or neglect shall be fined no more than \$2,000, imprisoned for no more than 1 year, or both.

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**Delaware****Failure to Report****Ann. Code Tit. 16, § 914**

Any person who violates § 903 of this title [that requires certain persons to report suspected child abuse or neglect] shall be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed \$10,000 for the first violation and not to exceed \$50,000 for any subsequent violation.

In any action brought under this section, if the court finds a violation, the court may award costs and attorneys' fees.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**District of Columbia****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 4-1321.07**

Any person required to make a report under the reporting laws who willfully fails to make such a report shall be fined no more than \$300, imprisoned for no more than 90 days, or both.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Florida****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 39.205(1)-(4)**

A person who is required to report known or suspected child abuse and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in §§ 775.082, 775.083, or 775.084. Upon conviction, the person may be:

- Imprisoned for a term not to exceed 5 years
- Fined \$5,000

Unless the court finds that the person is a victim of domestic violence or that other mitigating circumstances exist, a person who is age 18 or older and lives in the same house or living unit as a child who is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse, and knowingly and willfully fails to report the child abuse, commits a felony of the third degree.

Any Florida College System institution, State university, or nonpublic college, university, or school, whose administrators knowingly and willfully, upon receiving information from faculty, staff, or other institution employees, fail to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect committed on the property of the university, college, or school, or during an event or function sponsored by the university, college, or school, or who knowingly and willfully prevent another person from doing so, shall be subject to fines of \$1 million for each such failure.

Any Florida College System institution, State university, or nonpublic college, university, or school, whose law enforcement agency fails to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect committed on the property of the university, college, or school, or during an event or function sponsored by the university, college, or school, shall be subject to fines of \$1 million for each such failure.

**False Reporting****Ann. Stat. §§ 39.205(9); 39.206(1)**

A person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, or who advises another to make a false report, is guilty of a felony of the third degree. Upon conviction, the person may be:

- Imprisoned for a term not to exceed 5 years
- Fined \$5,000

In addition to any other penalty authorized by this section or other law, the Department of Children and Family Services may impose a fine, not to exceed \$10,000 for each violation, upon a person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report of abuse, abandonment, or neglect of a child, or a person who counsels another to make a false report.

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**Georgia****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 19-7-5(h)**

Any person or official required by law to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

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**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Guam****Failure to Report****Ann. Code Tit. 19, § 13207**

Any person required to report who fails to report an instance of child abuse that he or she knows to exist or reasonably should know to exist is guilty of a misdemeanor that is punishable by imprisonment for a term not to exceed 6 months, a fine of no more than \$1,000, or both.

A second or subsequent conviction shall be a felony in the third degree.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Hawaii****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 350-1.2**

Any mandatory reporter who knowingly prevents another person from reporting, or who knowingly fails to provide information as required by the reporting laws, shall be guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Idaho****Failure to Report****Idaho Code § 16-1605(4)**

Failure to report as required by the reporting laws shall be a misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Idaho Code § 16-1607**

Any person who makes a report or allegation of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect knowing the report is false, or who reports or alleges the same in bad faith or with malice, shall be liable to the party or parties against whom the report was made for the amount of actual damages sustained or statutory damages of \$2,500, whichever is greater, plus attorney's fees and costs of suit.

If the court finds that the defendant acted with malice or oppression, the court may award treble actual damages or treble statutory damages, whichever is greater.

**Illinois****Failure to Report****Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, §§ 5/4.02; 5/4**

Any physician who willfully fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect shall be referred to the Illinois State Medical Disciplinary Board for action in accordance with the Medical Practice Act of 1987. Any dentist or dental hygienist who willfully fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect shall be referred to the Department of Professional Regulation for action in accordance with the Illinois Dental Practice Act.

Any mandatory reporter who willfully fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor for a first violation and a Class 4 felony for a second or subsequent violation.

Any person who knowingly and willfully violates any provision of this Section is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor for a first violation and a Class 4 felony for a second or subsequent violation.

If the person acted as part of a plan or scheme having as its object the prevention of discovery of an abused or neglected child by lawful authorities for the purpose of protecting or insulating any person or entity from arrest or prosecution, the person is guilty of a Class 4 felony for a first offense and a Class 3 felony for a second or subsequent offense (regardless of whether the second or subsequent offense involves any of the same facts or persons as the first or other prior offense).

**False Reporting****Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/4**

Any person who knowingly transmits a false report to the department commits the offense of disorderly conduct under Ch. 720, § 5/26.1(a)(7). A violation of this provision is a Class 4 felony.

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**Indiana****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 31-33-22-1**

A person who knowingly fails to make a report required by law commits a Class B misdemeanor.

A person who, in his or her capacity as a staff member of a medical or other institution, school, facility, or agency, is required to make a report to the individual in charge of the institution, school, facility, or agency, or his or her designated agent, as required by § 31-33-5-2, and who knowingly fails to make a report commits a Class B misdemeanor. This penalty is imposed in addition to the penalty imposed above.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code § 31-33-22-3(a)-(b)**

A person who intentionally communicates to a law enforcement agency or the department a report of child abuse or neglect, knowing the report to be false, commits a Class A misdemeanor. The offense is a Class D felony if the person has a previous unrelated conviction for making a report of child abuse or neglect knowing the report to be false.

A person who intentionally communicates to a law enforcement agency or the department a report of child abuse or neglect knowing the report to be false is liable to the person accused of child abuse or neglect for actual damages. The finder of fact may award punitive damages and attorney's fees in an amount determined by the finder of fact against the person.

**Iowa****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 232.75(1)-(2)**

Any person, official, agency, or institution required to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

Any person, official, agency, or institution required by § 232.69 to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly fails to do so, or who knowingly interferes with the making of such a report in violation of § 232.70, is civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by such failure or interference.

**False Reporting****Ann. Stat. § 232.75(3)**

A person who reports or causes to be reported to the Department of Human Services false information regarding an alleged act of child abuse, knowing that the information is false or that the act did not occur, commits a simple misdemeanor.

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**Kansas****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 38-2223(e)**

Willful and knowing failure to make a report required by this section is a Class B misdemeanor. It is not a defense that another mandatory reporter made a report.

Intentionally preventing or interfering with the making of a report required by this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Ann. Stat. § 38-2223(e)**

Any person who willfully and knowingly makes a false report pursuant to this section or makes a report that such person knows lacks factual foundation is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

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**Kentucky****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 620.990(1)**

Any person intentionally violating the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. § 620.050(1)**

Any person who knowingly makes a false report and does so with malice shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

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**Louisiana****Failure to Report****Children's Code art. 609; Rev. Stat. 14:403(A)(1)**

Violation of the duties imposed upon a mandatory reporter subjects the offender to criminal prosecution.

Any person who is required to report the abuse or neglect of a child and knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be fined no more than \$500, imprisoned for no more than 6 months, or both.

Any person who is required to report the sexual abuse of a child or the abuse or neglect of a child that results in the serious bodily injury, neurological impairment, or death of the child, and knowingly and willfully fails to so report shall be fined no more than \$3,000, imprisoned, with or without hard labor, for no more than 3 years, or both. The term 'serious bodily injury' means injury involving protracted and obvious disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty, or substantial risk of death.

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**False Reporting****Children's Code art. 609; Rev. Stat. 14:403(A)(3)**

The filing of a report, known to be false, may subject the offender to criminal prosecution.

Any person who reports a child as abused or neglected or sexually abused to the department or to any law enforcement agency, knowing that such information is false, shall be fined no more than \$500, imprisoned for no more than 6 months, or both.

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**Maine****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. Tit. 22, § 4009**

A person who knowingly violates a provision of this chapter commits a civil violation for which a forfeiture of no more than \$500 may be adjudged.

**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. Tit. 22, § 4014(1)**

Immunity from any criminal or civil liability for the act of reporting or participating in the investigation or proceeding is not extended in instances when a false report is made and the person knows the report is false. Nothing in this section may be construed to bar criminal or civil action regarding perjury.

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**Maryland****Failure to Report**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Massachusetts****Failure to Report****Gen. Laws Ch. 119, § 51A**

Any mandatory reporter who fails to report shall be punished by a fine of no more than \$1,000.

Any mandated reporter who has knowledge of child abuse or neglect that resulted in serious bodily injury to or death of a child and willfully fails to report the abuse or neglect shall be punished by a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment for no more than 2 1/2 years, or by both, and, upon a guilty finding or a continuance without a finding, the court shall notify any appropriate professional licensing authority of the mandated reporter's violation of this paragraph.

**False Reporting****Gen. Laws Ch. 119, § 51A**

Whoever knowingly and willfully files a frivolous report of child abuse or neglect under this section shall be punished by:

- A fine of no more than \$2,000 for the first offense
  - Imprisonment for no more than 6 months and a fine of no more than \$2,000 for the second offense
  - Imprisonment for no more than 2 1/2 years and a fine of no more than \$2,000 for the third and subsequent offenses
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## Michigan

### Failure to Report

#### Comp. Laws § 722.633(1), (2)

A mandatory reporter who fails to report as required is civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by the failure.

A mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to report as required is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by one or both of the following:

- Imprisonment for no more than 93 days
- A fine of no more than \$500

### False Reporting

#### Comp. Laws § 722.633(5)

Any person who intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or neglect knowing that the report is false is guilty of a crime as follows:

- If the child abuse or neglect would not constitute a crime but would constitute a misdemeanor if the report were true, the person is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for no more than 93 days or a fine of no more than \$100, or both.
- If the child abuse or neglect reported would constitute a felony if the report were true, the person is guilty of a felony punishable by the lesser of the following:
  - » The penalty for the child abuse or neglect falsely reported
  - » Imprisonment for no more than 4 years or a fine of no more than \$2,000, or both

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## Minnesota

### Failure to Report

#### Ann. Stat. § 626.556, Subd. 6

A mandatory reporter who knows or has reason to believe that a child is neglected or physically or sexually abused, or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding 3 years, and fails to report the abuse is guilty of a misdemeanor.

A mandatory reporter who knows or has reason to believe that two or more children not related to the perpetrator have been physically or sexually abused by the same perpetrator within the preceding 10 years, and fails to report is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

A parent, guardian, or caregiver who knows or reasonably should know that the child's health is in serious danger and who fails to report:

- Is guilty of a gross misdemeanor if the child suffers substantial or great bodily harm because of the lack of medical care
- Is guilty of a felony if the child dies because of the lack of medical care and may be subject to one or both of the following:
  - » Imprisonment for no more than 2 years
  - » A fine of no more than \$4,000

The law providing that a parent, guardian, or caregiver may, in good faith, select and depend on spiritual means or prayer for treatment or care of a child does not exempt a parent, guardian, or caregiver from the duty to report under this provision.

### False Reporting

#### Ann. Stat. § 626.556, Subd. 5

Any person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false report under the reporting laws shall be liable in a civil suit for any actual damages suffered by the person(s) so reported and for any punitive damages set by the court or jury, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees.

**Mississippi****Failure to Report****Ann. Code. § 43-21-353(7)**

Anyone who willfully violates any provision of this section shall be, upon being found guilty, punished by a fine not to exceed \$5,000, by imprisonment in jail not to exceed 1 year, or both.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Missouri****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 210.165(1)**

Any person violating any provision of the reporting laws is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Ann. Stat. § 210.165(2)-(3)**

Any person who intentionally files a false report of child abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

Every person who has been previously convicted of making a false report to the Division of Family Services and who is subsequently convicted of making a false report is guilty of a Class D felony and shall be punished as provided by law.

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**Montana****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 41-3-207**

Any mandatory reporter who fails to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect or who prevents another person from reasonably doing so is civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by such failure or prevention.

Any mandatory reporter who purposely or knowingly fails to report when required or purposely or knowingly prevents another person from doing so is guilty of a misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code § 41-3-203(1)**

Anyone reporting any incident of child abuse or neglect as required by law is immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed unless the person was grossly negligent, acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose, or provided information knowing the information to be false.

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**Nebraska****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 28-717**

Any person who willfully fails to make any report of child abuse or neglect required by § 28-711 shall be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. § 28-716**

Any person participating in an investigation, making a report of child abuse or neglect, or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from a report shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed, except for maliciously false statements.

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**Nevada****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 432B.240**

Any person who knowingly and willfully violates the provisions of the reporting laws is guilty of a misdemeanor.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**New Hampshire****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 169-C:39**

Anyone who knowingly violates any provision of the reporting laws shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**New Jersey****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 9:6-8.14**

Any person knowingly violating the reporting laws, including the failure to report an act of child abuse having reasonable cause to believe that an act of child abuse has been committed, is a disorderly person.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**New Mexico****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. § 32A-4-3(F)**

Any person who violates the provisions of this section pertaining to the duty to report is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to § 31-19-1.

Upon conviction, the person shall be imprisoned in the county jail for a definite term that is less than 1 year, be fined no more than \$1,000, or both at the discretion of the judge.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**New York****Failure to Report****Soc. Serv. Law § 420**

Any mandatory reporter who willfully fails to report as required shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

Any mandatory reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report as required shall be civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by such failure.

**False Reporting****Penal Law § 240.50(4)**

A person is guilty of falsely reporting an incident in the third degree when, knowing the information reported, conveyed, or circulated to be false or baseless, he or she reports, by word or action, an alleged occurrence or condition of child abuse or maltreatment that did not in fact occur or exist to:

- The statewide central register of child abuse and maltreatment
- Any person required to report cases of suspected child abuse or maltreatment, knowing that the person is required to report such cases, and with the intent that such an alleged occurrence be reported to the statewide central register

Falsely reporting an incident in the third degree is a Class A misdemeanor.

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**North Carolina****Failure to Report****Gen. Stat. § 7B-310**

No privilege shall be grounds for any person or institution failing to report that a juvenile may have been abused, neglected, or dependent, even if the knowledge or suspicion is acquired in an official professional capacity, except when the knowledge or suspicion is gained by an attorney from that attorney's client during representation only in the abuse, neglect, or dependency case.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**North Dakota****Failure to Report****Cent. Code § 50-25.1-13**

Any person required by this chapter to report or to supply information concerning a case of known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or death resulting from abuse or neglect who willfully fails to do so is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Cent. Code § 50-25.1-13**

Any person who willfully makes a false report, or provides false information that causes a report to be made, is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor unless the false report is made to a law enforcement official, in which case the person who causes the report to be made is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

A person who willfully makes a false report, or willfully provides false information that causes a report to be made, also is liable in a civil action for all damages suffered by the person reported, including exemplary damages.

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**Northern Mariana Islands****Failure to Report****Commonwealth Code Tit. 6, § 5315**

Knowing or willful failure of any person to make a report pursuant to § 5313 shall, upon conviction, be punished by one or both of the following:

- Imprisonment for up to 1 year
- A fine of no more than \$1,000

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Ohio****Failure to Report****Rev. Code § 2151.99**

Any person who fails to report suspected child abuse or neglect, as required by § 2151.421, is guilty of a misdemeanor of the fourth degree.

Any person, required to report by § 2151.421(A)(4) [requiring reports by clergy], who fails to report when knowing that a child has been abused or neglected and knowing that the person who committed the abuse or neglect was a cleric or another person other than a volunteer, designated by a church, religious society, or faith to act as a leader, official, or delegate on behalf of the church, religious society, or faith, is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree if the person who has failed to report and the person who committed the abuse or neglect belong to the same church, religious society, or faith.

The person who fails to report is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree if the child suffers or faces the threat of suffering the physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition that would be the basis of the required report when the child is under the direct care or supervision of another person over whom the offender has supervisory control.

**False Reporting****Rev. Code § 2921.14**

No person shall knowingly make or cause another person to make a false report alleging that any person has committed an act or omission that resulted in a child being abused or neglected.

Whoever violates this section is guilty of making or causing a false report of child abuse or child neglect, a misdemeanor of the first degree.

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**Oklahoma****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-2-101(C)**

Any person who knowingly and willfully fails to promptly report suspected child abuse or neglect or who interferes with the prompt reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect may be reported to local law enforcement for criminal investigation and, upon conviction thereof, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

**False Reporting****Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-2-101(D)**

Any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report pursuant to the provisions of this section or a report that the person knows lacks factual foundation may be reported to local law enforcement for criminal investigation and, upon conviction thereof, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

If a court determines that an accusation of child abuse or neglect made during a child custody proceeding is false and the person making the accusation knew it to be false at the time the accusation was made, the court may impose a fine, not to exceed \$5,000 and reasonable attorney fees incurred in recovering the sanctions, against the person making the accusation. The remedy provided by this paragraph is in addition to the first paragraph above or to any other remedy provided by law.

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**Oregon****Failure to Report****Rev. Stat. § 419B.010(3)**

A person who violates the reporting laws commits a Class A violation. Prosecution under this law shall be commenced at any time within 18 months after the commission of the offense.

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**False Reporting****Rev. Stat. § 419B.016**

A person commits the offense of making a false report of child abuse if, with the intent to influence a custody, parenting time, visitation, or child support decision, the person:

- Makes a false report of child abuse to the Department of Human Services or a law enforcement agency, knowing that the report is false
- With the intent that a public or private official make a report of child abuse to the Department of Human Services or a law enforcement agency, makes a false report of child abuse to the public or private official, knowing that the report is false

Making a false report of child abuse is a Class A violation.

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**Pennsylvania****Failure to Report****Cons. Stat. Ch. 23, § 6319**

A mandatory reporter who willfully fails to report as required commits a misdemeanor of the third degree for the first violation and a misdemeanor of the second degree for a second or subsequent violation.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Puerto Rico****Failure to Report**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Rhode Island****Failure to Report****Gen. Laws § 40-11-6.1**

Any mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to report as required or who knowingly prevents any person acting reasonably from doing so, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be subject to a fine of no more than \$500, imprisonment for no more than 1 year, or both.

In addition, any mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to perform any act required by the reporting laws or who knowingly prevents another person from performing a required act shall be civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by that failure.

**False Reporting****Gen. Laws § 40-11-3.2**

Any person who knowingly and willingly makes or causes to be made to the department a false report of child abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined no more than \$1,000, imprisoned for no more than 1 year, or both.

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**South Carolina****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 63-7-410**

Any mandatory reporter or any person required to perform any other function under the reporting laws, who knowingly fails to do so, or a person who threatens or attempts to intimidate a witness, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined no more than \$500, be imprisoned for no more than 6 months, or both.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code § 63-7-440**

It is unlawful to knowingly make a false report of abuse or neglect. A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined no more than \$5,000, imprisoned for no more than 90 days, or both.

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**South Dakota****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. §§ 26-8A-3; 26-8A-4; 26-8A-6; 26-8A-7**

Any mandatory reporter who knowingly and intentionally fails to make the required report is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. This provision includes:

- Reports that must be made to the coroner when the reporter suspects that a child has died as a result of abuse or neglect
- Reports required of hospital staff
- Reports that are required of staff of public or private schools

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Tennessee****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 37-1-412**

Any person who knowingly fails to make a report required by § 37-1-403 commits a Class A misdemeanor.

A person believed to have violated this section shall be brought before the court. If the defendant pleads not guilty, the juvenile court judge shall bind the defendant over to the grand jury. If the defendant pleads guilty, the juvenile court judge shall sentence the defendant under this section with a fine not to exceed \$2,500.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code Ann. § 37-1-413**

Any person who either verbally or by written or printed communication knowingly and maliciously reports or causes, encourages, aids, counsels, or procures another to report a false accusation of child sexual abuse, or false accusation that a child has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect, commits a Class E felony.

**Texas****Failure to Report****Fam. Code § 261.109**

A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report in accordance with the reporting laws.

An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor, except that the offense is a State jail felony if it is shown on the trial of the offense that the child was a person with mental retardation who resided in a State-supported living center, the medical assistance program for persons with mental retardation component of the Rio Grande State Center, or a facility licensed under Chapter 252, Health and Safety Code, and the actor knew that the child had suffered serious bodily injury as a result of the abuse or neglect.

**False Reporting****Fam. Code § 261.107**

A person commits an offense if, with the intent to deceive, he or she knowingly makes a report of child abuse or neglect that is false. An offense under this subsection is:

- A State jail felony
- A felony of the third degree if the person has previously been convicted under this section

A person who is convicted of an offense under this section shall:

- Pay any reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the person who was falsely accused of abuse or neglect
  - Be liable to the State for a civil penalty of \$1,000
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**Utah****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 62A-4a-411**

Any person, official, or institution required to report a case of suspected child abuse, child sexual abuse, neglect, fetal alcohol syndrome, or fetal drug dependency who willfully fails to do so is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

Action for failure to report must be commenced within 4 years from the date of knowledge of the offense and the willful failure to report.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Vermont****Failure to Report****Ann. Stat. Tit. 33, § 4913(f)**

A person who violates the law requiring mandated reporters to report suspected child abuse or neglect shall be fined not more than \$500.

A person who violates the reporting laws with the intent to conceal abuse or neglect of a child shall be imprisoned no more than 6 months, fined for no more than \$1,000, or both.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Virgin Islands****Failure to Report****Ann. Code Tit. 5, § 2539**

Any person, official, or institution required by this subchapter to report a case of alleged child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect, or to perform any other act, who knowingly fails to do so, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined no more than \$500, imprisoned for no more than 1 year, or both.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code Tit. 14, §§ 2146(c); 2144(a)**

A person is guilty of falsely reporting an incident in the second degree when, knowing the information reported, conveyed, or circulated to be false or baseless, he or she reports, by word or action, to the Department of Human Services or Department of Health, an alleged occurrence of child abuse or maltreatment that did not, in fact, occur or exist. A person who is found guilty of reporting an incident in the second degree shall be:

- Fined \$5,000
  - Imprisoned for no less than 5 years
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**Virginia****Failure to Report****Ann. Code § 63.2-1509(D)-(E)**

Any person required to file a report pursuant to this section who fails to do so as soon as possible, but no longer than 24 hours after having reason to suspect a reportable offense of child abuse or neglect, shall be fined no more than \$500 for the first failure and, for any subsequent failures, no less than \$1,000. In cases evidencing acts of rape, sodomy, or object sexual penetration, § 18.2-61 *et seq.*, a person who knowingly and intentionally fails to make the report required pursuant to this section shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

No person shall be required to make a report pursuant to this section if the person has actual knowledge that the same matter has already been reported to the local department or the department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.

**False Reporting****Ann. Code § 63.2-1513(A)**

Any person age 14 or older who makes or causes to be made a report of child abuse or neglect that he or she knows to be false shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Any person age 14 or older who has been previously convicted under this subsection and who is subsequently convicted of making a false report of child abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony.

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**Washington****Failure to Report****Rev. Code §§ 26.44.080; 9A.20.021**

Every person who is required to make a report pursuant to the reporting laws and who knowingly fails to make such a report, shall be guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

Every person convicted of a gross misdemeanor shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for no more than 1 year, a fine of no more than \$5,000, or both.

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**False Reporting**

**Rev. Code §§ 26.44.060(4); 9A.20.021**

A person who intentionally and in bad faith knowingly makes a false report of alleged abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Every person convicted of a misdemeanor shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for no more than 90 days, a fine of no more than \$1,000, or both.

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**West Virginia**

**Failure to Report**

**Ann. Code § 49-6A-8**

Any mandated reporter who knowingly fails to report as required, or knowingly prevents another person acting reasonably from doing so, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be subject to confinement in the county jail for no more than 30 days, a fine of no more than \$1,000, or both.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Wisconsin**

**Failure to Report**

**Ann. Stat. § 48.981(6)**

Whoever intentionally violates the reporting laws by failure to report as required may be fined no more than \$1,000, imprisoned for no more than 6 months, or both.

**False Reporting**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

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**Wyoming**

**Failure to Report**

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

**False Reporting**

**Ann. Stat. § 14-3-205(d)**

Any person who knowingly and intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or neglect, or who encourages or coerces another person to make a false report, is guilty of a misdemeanor that is punishable by imprisonment for no more than 6 months, a fine of no more than \$750, or both.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

