

A publication of the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Santa Barbara County — because their world depends on us!
 Member of the Coastal Tri-Counties Child Abuse Prevention Council

Questions About Mandated Reporting? Start Here!

In 2011, the Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council trained over 700 mandated reporters on identifying, reporting and preventing child abuse and neglect. This article features some of the most frequently asked questions from those trainings.

Who reports most frequently?

Mandated reporters report much more frequently than discretionary reporters. Reports by discretionary reporters, including family, friends and neighbors make up about 25% of all calls. The majority of mandated reports come from community based social workers or advocates. Only about 5% of calls originate from a medical professional. (Source: Center for Social Services Research, University of California at Berkeley)

On average, how many calls does the hotline receive per day?

Annually, the hotline receives over 4,400 calls, averaging to 86 calls a week or 12 calls a day. Each call requires about 30 minutes of a social worker's time, from answering the phone to completing and processing paperwork.

What percentage of calls result in an investigation?

On average about 85% of all calls are investigated. Only about 15% of reports are determined over the phone to not fit the criteria of child abuse or neglect. Of the reports that are investigated, about 15-20% are substantiated, meaning found to have met the legal definition of child abuse or neglect.



What concerns are reported most frequently?

Over half of reports are made in reference to general neglect. This is true for all age groups, including infants and teenagers, and for both genders. Boys and girls are reported at about the same rate.

As a Mandated Reporter, is my name entered in the Child Welfare database also? Are calls being recorded?

Yes, your name and contact information is recorded with the report. However, this information is completely confidential and is never shared with anyone outside of Child Welfare Services or the court system. Calls are not recorded at present.

What training and education is a hotline worker typically required to have?

Each individual who answers the hotline is a social service worker with a bache-

lor's degree in a human science field, such as sociology or psychology. In addition, hotline social workers receive specialized training specific to the hotline, including use of the standardized Structured Decision Making tool. This tool is used throughout the State of California to determine the most appropriate response to the situation being described.

What information should I ideally have available when placing the call?

In addition to a description of the situation or concern that prompted the call, you will be asked for names and addresses of the child and his or her parent(s) or caregiver(s), the child's age and gender and your name and contact information. Try to be as descriptive and detailed as you can about what you have noticed and the circumstances in which you became aware of the problem. However, you should call regardless of how much specific information you have available. The only time the hotline worker will not be able to take your report is when there is no address or permanent location for the family or child.

Why do I have to complete a SCAR form, as well as placing a call?

The SCAR form (available online at www.PreventChildAbuseSB.org or www.caag.state.ca.us/childabuse/pdf/ss_8572.pdf) is required to ensure that the information presented verbally has been

noted accurately and completely. The form also serves as a back-up to ensure that no report is inadvertently overlooked.

What should I do if observe what looks like child abuse in a public place, like a grocery store?

While this question is frequently posed and often used in the media as an example of how bystanders should help, the reality is that the majority of child abuse cases are more likely to be reported by individuals with repeated contact with the child or family, such as friends, extended family, neighbors or professionals who interact regularly with the child or family, know their name and/or address and can watch for signs of concern. When you do witness a parent publicly losing control, you (or a store manager or security guard if available) absolutely should call 911 if the child is in immediate physical danger or the parent has lost control to the point where they constitute an immediate threat to the child. If you choose to intervene in a less extreme case where you witness a parent in public who is yelling, threatening or hitting a child, the most successful tactic is to make your presence known to the parent in a non-confrontational manner by addressing them with a request or comment not directly related to their behavior, such as commenting on a purchase, offering to help if the child has broken or toppled something or offering some positive comments about the child. If you witness an escalating situation, try to engage the child or the parent before anything happens. If a security guard or store manager is present, you should alert them to the situation. The least useful thing to do is to make critical remarks or try to shame or embarrass the parent.

Why should I attend Mandated Reporting training if I already had one or have been making reports for years?

While the basic information of the Mandated Reporting law has not changed significantly in recent years, the CAPC recommends regular refresher trainings for a number of reasons. Refresher trainings allow staff to keep the information current and in the forefront of their minds as they are interacting with families and children. Just as with CPR training, for example, you want to be prepared when suddenly encountering a situation that requires you act. Typically, the more prepared a person is the better their response will be in an emergency or when it is needed. Mandated Reporters who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities under the law, and solid knowledge of what constitutes child abuse and neglect, what to look out for and how and when to place a call to the hotline typically provide more useful reports to Child Welfare Services. The quality of a report is a very important factor in whether or not a family is able to receive a timely and appropriate response to their needs. Also, a standard mandated reporter training contains a full hour of important information. We often receive feedback from the audience that seeing the presentation again allowed them to concentrate on different sections that they had not been able to focus on in depth at the first viewing. In addition, in-person trainings offer an opportunity to discuss your concerns or experiences with peers and social workers from the field. Finally, groups have the option to schedule advanced, interactive trainings if participants have a solid understanding of the basic information required by law.

Is mandated reporter training available online?

Yes, you can access mandated reporter training at mandatedreporterca.com/. Several training modules for a variety of professions are available. The online training is a good resource for new hires or for periodic refresher training. However, the Child Abuse Prevention Council recommends that you attend an in-person training at least once initially and then approximately every three to five years. In-person trainings typically include a trainer familiar with local resources and prevention programs and a CWS social worker, who is able to answer questions about specific practices in the county or experiences when making a report. Both beginner and advanced trainings are available upon request via www.PreventChildAbuseSB.org or through one of the annual Child Abuse Prevention Academies at your local community college.

I understand my duties as a mandated reporter, but would like to help families before their situation becomes a crisis. What can I do?

The best response is prevention. Making sure that the [five protective factors](#) are present and accessible for all families in your community is one of the best ways to prevent child abuse and neglect. Remaining aware of risk factors, being familiar with available community resources and how to navigate them, and not being afraid to speak up when you have a concern are other important ways you can help. Finally, for those interested in learning more about what is happening with child abuse and neglect prevention in Santa Barbara County, consider joining the local [Child Abuse Prevention Council](#).

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS: SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Parents need people they can call on for sympathetic listening, advice and concrete support. These networks of support are essential to parents and also offer opportunities for people to give back to the community, an important factor in building self-esteem. Friends, family members, neighbors and community members can all help provide emotional support, boost problem-solving skills, offer parenting tips, share frustrations and give concrete assistance to parents and caregivers in times of need.

To help reinforce this protective factor in your environment, find ways to help connect with parents, and to help connect parents to each other. Familiarize yourself with the resources in your community, such as parenting groups, family resource centers and parent leadership programs. Learn to identify signs that a family may be struggling or isolated. Isolated families may need extra help in reaching out to build positive relationships.

For more information on the protective factors, visit www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/protectfactors.

I Will Not Be Silent

In the wake of the tragedies of sexual abuse unfolding at Penn State University, CALM (Child Abuse Listening and Mediation) has launched the **I Will Not Be Silent** campaign to raise awareness for the fight against child abuse. CALM is making a statement that in Santa Barbara County, we speak up for children.

The pledge states “I will have the courage to report child abuse and work with CALM toward a vision of ending child abuse in Santa Barbara County.” You may join this effort by adding your name to the pledge at www.calm4kids.org. Please feel free to send the link to friends and colleagues. Express your solidarity with children and stand up and be counted.

Three Essential Online Resources for Child Abuse Prevention

There are a great number of useful websites with data or information relevant to child abuse prevention. Many of them are listed online at PreventChildAbuseSB.org/resources.html. Three key resources we'd like to highlight in this issue are the Child Welfare Information Gateway, Strengthening Families, and KidsData.

The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](http://www.childwelfare.gov) (www.childwelfare.gov) features information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families, with current research and materials on prevention through permanency, including child abuse and neglect, family preservation, foster care and adoption. The site is a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The site hosts a wealth of tools, including access to publications, other sites, databases and online learning tools, including resources that can be shared with families.

[Strengthening Families](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net) (www.strengtheningfamilies.net) hosts information on the Strengthening Families framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy over the last decade to prevent child abuse and neglect. The approach builds on an evidence-based understanding

that families thrive when protective factors are robust in their lives and communities. Strengthening Families focuses on building five protective factors that promote healthy outcomes, and is a research-based, cost-effective strategy to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. Using this approach, over thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help programs working with children and families build protective factors and align services. The site features presentations, handouts and an online self-assessment to improve program practices, as well as information and resources on the protective factors.

If you're looking for data about the health and well being of children in California, start with Kidsdata.org. The site offers a wealth of data for every city, county and school district in the state, making it easy to monitor trends and identify disparities. Searches can be made by region, demographic group or topic. Topics cover everything from child safety, demographics, special needs and child care, to family economics, education and health. Results can be presented as downloadable tables, trend graphs, maps, bars or pie graphs. The site is easy to navigate and full of useful data, contextual information and related resources.

Members Corner



As a CAPC we are busy in our communities working with parents and children. CAPC members and supporters contribute stories related to what their organizations are doing and how you can utilize them as a resource. The following features information on the Santa Barbara Teen Coalition and the Santa Maria Valley Teen Services Coalition—groups who come together to network for the benefit of teens countywide.

Collaboration is Key: North and South County Coalitions for Teen Service Providers

The Santa Barbara Teen Coalition is a group of approximately 45 programs or agencies in Santa Barbara County that came together approximately 3 years ago to help bridge any gaps in services for teens. The Coalition's mission is "to serve as a collaborative professional networking resource for programming and activities for youth, specifically teens, in order to leverage dollars, enhance programming, and increase participation. The Coalition will work together with teens, families, and agencies to provide educational, recreational, therapeutic and wellness programs that will enrich the lives of our community." The group meets every two months with the goals of assisting one another and being resources to each other and to the community.

"I found that working with the SBTC has not only enhanced my knowledge and resource of programming for teens, but it has enabled me to be a better teen programmer," shared Susan Young, co-founder of the Santa Barbara Teen Coalition.

The SBTC has come together for specific events such as SPARC – a youth-led youth-developed activity, as well as the Santa Barbara Youth Leadership Banquet. One of the proudest achievements of the Coalition is the success of their annual Professional Development Day, during which providers receive training and information on how to enhance their skills.



Members of the Santa Barbara Teen Coalition network to improve services to teens.

In North County, a similar network has recently developed. The Santa Maria Valley Teen Services Coalition held their first meeting in August 2011, and continue to meet quarterly. All agencies, organizations and individuals who serve teens in the Santa Maria Valley region are welcome to attend. Meetings are held with the purpose of creating a networking space for service providers to share about available programming or activities, resources of mutual interest, and the needs of teens in the area.

To get involved in the Santa Barbara Teen Coalition, please email SYoung@SantaBarbaraCA.gov. To get involved in the Santa Maria Valley Teen Services Coalition, please email j.thomas@sbcsocialserv.org.

Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

If you are a Santa Barbara County mandated reporter and you suspect child abuse or neglect, YOU MUST ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES:

1. Immediately call Child Welfare Services at:

800.367.0166 Santa Barbara County Hotline

In the case of an emergency, please call 911.

2. Complete and file a Suspected Child Abuse Report, Form #SS8572 (www.CTC-CAPC.org/SCAR)
3. Retain a legible copy of the SCAR Report.
4. YOU are responsible for making this report. DO NOT ALLOW your supervisor/principal to make the report for you or assume because another co-worker has some of the same information that they will make the report.
5. Do not attempt to investigate, conduct interviews or interfere with the information you hold.
6. Remember that you are to report SUSPECTED abuse—you are not required to have witnessed or have complete proof of the incident. You are obligated by law to report what you observe or what you are told that caused suspicion the child is being physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected. When in doubt, call CWS or law enforcement and get their input about the scope of your report.

This info is also available at www.PreventChildAbuseSB.org!

The Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council welcomes your feedback, ideas and requests for training and resources.

Email us at:

capc_newsletter@gmail.com

The CAPC meets the third Thursday of every month (except August and December) from 10am-12pm at the Santa Ines Mission. All meetings are open to the public. To receive agendas or more information, call the KIDS Network at 346.8222, or email j.thomas@sbcsocialserv.org.

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