

Policy Concerning Abuse or Neglect of Minors

October 1, 2011



— ARCHDIOCESE OF —
NEW ORLEANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Every human being is created with a God-given dignity. Therefore, the Catholic Church teaches that God condemns all forms of abuse or neglect of people of all ages. In regard specifically to minors or to adults who allege they were abused as minors, it is the policy of the Archdiocese that the abuse of minors is sinful, reprehensible and intolerable behavior and it is illegal. Any such conduct is to be considered, by its very nature, completely contrary to Catholic teaching, Christian morality and contrary to the employment and/or ministry of all those who serve the Archdiocese of New Orleans and any of its related entities.

All who serve the Archdiocese must comply with all local, state and federal reporting laws.

The abuse or neglect of a minor is contrary to the moral instruction, doctrines, and the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church as a whole and the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), 2011. Such behavior includes actions that cause injury to another.

II. DEFINITIONS

- “Sexual Abuse” of a minor or an adult who reports abuse as a minor includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification. Such “sexual abuse” may also include the involvement, use, aiding, tolerating, employment, persuasion, inducement, enticement, sexual exploitation, or coercion of any minor to engage in, or having a minor assist any other person to engage in, any sexual conduct. This would include, but is not limited to, producing any visual depiction of such conduct, including, but not limited to the cell phones, cameras, the internet, and the acquisition, possession, or distribution of pornography as a result of relationships developed by any means or circumstances whether in a position performing service for the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities, or whether or not in the employment or ministry of the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities.
- “Other Physical Abuse” is the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to a minor. This applies while performing service for the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities, or outside of any position with the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities.
- “Neglect” is the refusal or failure of a caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, or treatment for injury, illness, or condition of the child, resulting in the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health and safety being substantially threatened or impaired. This applies whether or not the caretaker is in employment or ministry of the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities.
- “Person Responsible for the Minor’s Care” is any employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities that cares for or supervises minors.
- “Mandated reporters” are required to report any abuse of minors to law enforcement and/or the Department of Children and Family Services immediately, as specified by law. (See Summary of Louisiana Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting Laws)

- “Supervisor” is a pastor of a parish, principal of a school, or the director of an archdiocesan office or related entity or their delegate responsible for the oversight of those who serve the Archdiocese.
- “Minor” is any individual under the age of eighteen (18) or one who habitually lacks the use of reason.
- “Adult” (major) means any individual eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- “Cleric” is a priest or deacon.
- “Church Personnel” is any employee, volunteer, or contract worker who serves the Archdiocese or its related entities in ministry to minors, whether clergy, religious, or lay.
- “Archdiocese of New Orleans” and “Archdiocese” include the Archdiocesan departments and administrative offices, all parishes, missions, schools, institutions, agencies, and other offices under the direct supervision of the Archdiocese and its related entities.
- “Independent Contractor” is a person retained by the Archdiocese or its related entities (cafeteria workers, instructors, therapists, maintenance personnel). An independent contractor who has ongoing, unsupervised (or the possibility of unsupervised) contact with minors must comply with the background screening, training, and mandatory reporting requirements of the Archdiocese and the State of Louisiana.
- “Executive Directors” are the heads of Departments within the Archdiocese: Pastoral Services, Clergy, Religious, Christian Formation, Community Service, and Financial Services.
- “Delegate Investigator” is a person who does the preliminary, canonical investigation.
- “Promoter of Justice” determines whether or not to prosecute and then is the prosecutor if there is a canonical trial.
- “Victims’ Assistance Coordinator” receives the allegation of abuse by a cleric and follows the appropriate process.

III. DUTY TO DISTRIBUTE

A copy of this policy shall be sent by the Archbishop of New Orleans to all clergy, religious, seminarians, archdiocesan departments and office directors, presidents and principals of Catholic schools, parish directors of religious education, parish directors of youth ministry, and directors of related entities. Those listed above are obligated by this policy to distribute it to all those who serve the Archdiocese and its related entities as employees, volunteers, or contract workers.

IV. EDUCATION

All employees and volunteers of the Archdiocese and any independent contract workers who have ongoing, unsupervised (possibility of unsupervised) contact with minors shall receive Safe Environment training regarding recognition and prevention of abuse or neglect of minors, teachings of the Catholic Church, mandatory reporting laws of the State of Louisiana and mandatory reporting requirements of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Safe Environment training is required before beginning ministry within the church. Thereafter, according to Archdiocesan policy, training will be required every three years.

V. QUESTIONNAIRE, STATEMENT, AND BACKGROUND EVALUATION

All those who serve the Archdiocese of New Orleans, clergy or lay, employee, volunteer, or contract worker will complete the *Questionnaire For Prospective Employees and Volunteers Who Will Have Ongoing, Unsupervised Contact With Minors*. They will also have to complete the required background screening and receive clearance prior to beginning their work with minors. Background checks include Social Security Number verification, civil parish to civil parish record checks, sex offender registry, and a national criminal file search.

The criminal background check and clearance for employees will be paid for by their employer or parish, institution, agency, or related entity where services are rendered.

Completed Questionnaires and background screening forms shall be maintained permanently and confidentially in the personnel file of the employee or, in the case of volunteers, in a separate file established for this purpose. Even when a person ceases to be involved in service to the archdiocese, his/her questionnaire and form will be kept permanently. Due to the confidential nature of all personnel files, access to these files is to be limited to pastors, their delegates, or the director of the office or agency, institution or related entity.

The Questionnaire and information supplied to complete the background screening for clergy are to be maintained in archdiocesan files.

Background screening will be conducted every three years, and/or in accord with Archdiocesan policy.

VI. OBLIGATION TO REPORT

Any person who has actual knowledge of or who has cause to believe any incident of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of a minor by those who serve the Archdiocese of New Orleans, or its related entities, has occurred shall comply with all applicable reporting requirements of the State of Louisiana and all applicable local and federal laws. An individual with reasonable cause to believe abuse or neglect has occurred has the obligation to report even if another report has been made. [Essential Norms (Norms), 11]

In addition, a verbal report shall be made immediately to the supervisor, who will report immediately to the Executive Director of the Department within the Archdiocese to whom the parish, school, organization is accountable. [Clergy, Christian Formation, Pastoral Services, Religious, Community Services, Financial and Administrative Services]

The “Alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect Reporting Form When An Allegation is Against an Employee or Volunteer of the Archdiocese of New Orleans” will be submitted to the Executive Director of the appropriate department by the person who initially received the report or first learned of the alleged abuse or neglect.

Allegations Involving Priests or Deacons (made by an adult)

Any person who receives an allegation of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of a minor or alleges to have been abused as a minor by a priest or deacon who is an adult at the time the allegation is received shall immediately report such allegation to the Vicar General or to his delegate.

VII. POLICY ON SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR BY A PRIEST OR DEACON IN ACCORD WITH THE REVISED ESSENTIAL NORMS PUBLISHED MAY 15, 2006 AND THE SUBSTANTIVE NORMS PROMULGATED MAY 21, 2010

Executive Power of Governance: For the sake of the common good and in observing the code of canon law, the Archbishop exercises the executive power of governance to ensure that any priest or deacon who has committed even one act of abuse or neglect of a minor shall not continue in active ministry (Norms, 9).

Preliminary Investigation: When a report is received from a person, who, either a major or a minor, alleges having been sexually abused by a cleric during his/her minority, the Vicar General, either personally or through his delegate, shall communicate the information received to the Archbishop and to the accused cleric, within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt of the report. The accused cleric is to be counseled that he is not to confront or challenge the accuser, nor is he to arrange for any confrontation or challenge in any way by another person, nor is he to retaliate against his accuser or the reporter in any way.

A person who requests that the Church investigate an allegation of abuse or neglect of a minor will be informed by the Vicar General or his delegate that a written statement, called a “complaint,” will be necessary for a canonical investigation to be undertaken.

The Archbishop will carefully inquire, personally or through the Vicar General or his delegate, about the facts, circumstances and imputability of an allegation, unless such an inquiry seems entirely superfluous. (c. 1717 §1). The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to acquire clear and specific understanding of the facts and circumstances of the alleged actions.

The Archbishop will immediately provide for the pastoral care of the allegedly abused person. The Victims’ Assistance Coordinator and/or the treating therapist will also make the report to law enforcement. (Norms, 3). When the report involves a minor, law requires the person of first instance to make the report.

The Vicar General or his delegate will recommend that the cleric retain a canonical advocate and/or civil counsel.

Principles of Conducting the Preliminary Investigation: When it is necessary, the Archbishop will direct an investigation to be “conducted promptly and objectively” (Norms, 6). He will appoint a delegate investigator when necessary to proceed with this investigation.

The investigation into a complaint of sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric will be conducted according to the requirements of canon law and civil law. In canon law, as in civil law, a person is presumed innocent until guilt has been established or admitted.

The right to privacy and the good reputation of all parties associated with the incident(s) under investigation are integral to the investigation. Care must be taken so that the good name of the individuals is not endangered from this investigation. (Norms 6; c. 1717 §2)

During the preliminary investigation, evidence will be gathered to determine if there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred. Evidence will be sought as to whether or not the alleged action is imputable by the cleric, i.e. caused by the cleric. (Norms, 6)

When the evidence required by canon law has been gathered, the delegate will write a report to the Archbishop. This report will indicate the reliability and sufficiency of the evidence gathered during the investigation. It will be communicated to the Archbishop and to the Review Board.

Review Board: the Archdiocesan Review Board, established by the Archbishop, will be composed of at least five persons of outstanding integrity and good judgment in full communion with the Church. The majority of the review board members will be lay persons who are not in the employ of the archdiocese; but at least one member should be

a priest who is an experienced and respected pastor of the archdiocese. If at all possible, at least one member should have particular expertise in the treatment of sexual abuse of minors. The members will be appointed for a term of five years which can be renewed. It is desirable that the Promoter of Justice participate in the meetings of the review board (Norms, 5).

After receiving the report of the delegate investigator, the Archbishop will consult the chairperson of the Archdiocesan Review Board for an assessment of the complaint and the information gathered during the preliminary investigation.

After the board has been consulted, the board will offer to the Archbishop an independent and confidential review of the complaint and recommend how to proceed.

Closing the Preliminary Investigation: The Archbishop will carefully consider the facts gathered during the preliminary investigation together with the reports and recommendations of the Review Board and the Delegate Investigator.

If the Archbishop determines that the facts gathered are insufficient to establish the probability of a delict, i.e. an offense, the accused is to be “promptly notified of the investigation” (Norms, 6). The Archbishop is to prepare an appropriate administrative decree. The acts of the preliminary investigation and the Archbishop’s decree explaining the insufficiency or doubtful nature of the proofs are to be placed in the archdiocesan archives (c. 1719).

If the Archbishop determines that sufficient evidence has been gathered to establish the possibility of a delict, he shall issue a decree closing the preliminary investigation. He, then, will undertake the following steps:

The accused cleric is to be promptly notified of the results of the investigation (Norms, 6).

The precautionary measures mentioned in canon 1722 are to be applied, i.e., remove the accused from sacred ministry or from any ecclesiastical office or function, impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory, and prohibit the public participation in the Most Holy Eucharist pending the outcome of the judicial process.

The acts of the preliminary investigation together with the Archbishop’s summary of facts are to be transmitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) at the Holy See. After considering these materials, the CDF will notify the Archbishop whether it will adjudicate the case or direct the Archbishop how to proceed. (Norms, 8A).

The determination of the Archbishop will be communicated to the complainant.

Penal Trial: When directed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Archbishop shall decree the initiation of a judicial penal process (c. 1718). He shall nominate a collegial tribunal and shall give the acts of the preliminary investigation to the Promoter of Justice, who will present a petition of accusation to the presiding judge (cc 1502, 1504, 1721).

The Tribunal will decide whether or not to accept the petition (c. 1506).

The presiding judge will issue a decree stating the issues to be considered in the trial and setting the time for the Promoter of Justice and the accused cleric to complete the evidence and present it to the Tribunal (c. 1661). During the trial either party may introduce evidence including calling witnesses and introducing proofs, documents and other information.

The instruction of the case will normally be carried out by one of the judges of the Tribunal (c. 1561). A priest notary will be present during each of the procedural acts and must notarize written acts (cc. 483 §2; 1437)

Evidence may be introduced into the trial by means of public and private documents or witness testimony. Public documents will be trusted concerning everything that is directly and principally affirmed in them, unless contrary and evident arguments show otherwise (cc.1539;1541). Under the supervision of a canonical judge, proof by means of both public and private documents and witnesses is allowed. (c. 1547).

The accused cleric is not bound to admit the offense, nor may an oath be demanded of him (c. 1728 §2). If the cleric decides to give testimony, either spoken or written, he has the right to do so last, either personally or through his advocate (c. 1725).

If it becomes clear to the Tribunal, at any point, that the accused cleric did not commit the alleged offense, the Tribunal has the duty to declare this fact *ex officio* in a judicial sentence and absolve the accused (c. 1726).

The Judicial Sentence and the Communication of the Acts: Once all of the evidence has been collected, the presiding canonical judge will permit the parties and their advocates to inspect, at the chancery, the evidence not yet known to them. (cc.1598-1606). The Promoter of Justice and the Advocate for the accused cleric will be given opportunity to inspect the acts and propose other evidence. When this process is completed, the presiding judge will decree the conclusion of the case.

The decision of the Tribunal, as to the innocence or guilt of the accused cleric, will be based on the evidence assembled in the acts. This decision will be pronounced in a judicial sentence, which must answer the questions stated in the grounds established for the trial (c. 1611). The sentence is to be published to the Promoter of Justice and the accused as soon as possible. The accused and the complainant will be informed that the sentence can be challenged (cc. 1614 – 1615) through an appeal to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. (This special procedure was established by the Holy Father on the occasion of the audience granted to the Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith on 14 February 2003).

Just Penalties: According to the law of the Church, a cleric who has committed an offense against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with a minor “is to be punished with just penalties, including dismissal from the clerical state if the case warrants it” (c. 1395 §2). The particular law of the United States declares that “when even a single act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case so warrants” (Norms, 8; c. 1395 §2).

“If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (e.g., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the accused ought to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. He is to be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest” (Norms, 8 §B).

Acquittal and Exoneration: The cleric will be declared to be acquitted of all charges when it is determined that the complaint is unfounded, false, or not factual, or that the complaint is unsubstantiated due to insufficient evidence. (c. 1724, 1726; Norms, 13)

When a cleric is to be restored to ministry the Archbishop will invite him to a personal meeting to discuss the steps to be taken to restore him to ministry and/or ecclesiastical office.

The Archbishop will make every effort to restore the good name of the accused.

VIII. POLICY ON SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR BY A PRIEST OR DEACON WHO IS A MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION SERVING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

A canonical relationship exists between religious institutes and the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Therefore, if a report alleges sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon of a religious institute, an investigation shall be made in accordance with the policy outlined above on the sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon of the Archdiocese. The only exception is that wherever the term in the Policy refers to “Archbishop,” the term “religious ordinary” is hereby substituted. It is the responsibility of the religious institute to initiate the investigation if the accused is a member of a religious order.

Finally, any conflicts between the sexual abuse policy of the Archdiocese and the sexual abuse policy of the religious institute will be resolved by the Archbishop or his delegate and the religious institute.

IX. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEN AND WOMEN WHO BELONG TO RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES, WHO ARE NOT CLERICS, SERVING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

A canonical relationship exists between priests, deacons, and religious of religious institutes and the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Thus, if a report alleges sexual abuse of a minor by a sister or brother who serves in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and who belongs to a religious institute, an investigation respecting the particular policy of the religious institute shall be made in the following manner:

It is the responsibility of the Victims' Assistance Coordinator to notify the Major Superior of a religious institute that an allegation against one of its members has been received and to request the cooperation of the religious institute in the investigation. The Executive Director for Religious of the Archdiocese, in conjunction with the Victims' Assistance Coordinator, will work with the religious institute when an allegation has been received against a sister, brother, seminarian, or member in formation who serves or has served in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and who belongs to a religious institute.

Should an allegation be made directly to the Major Superior of a religious institute, the Major Superior shall inform the Victims' Assistance Coordinator and/or the Executive Director of Religious of the allegation. The Victims' Assistance Coordinator will inform the Vicar General that an allegation has been made. The Major Superior will conduct the investigation following the Archdiocesan process or the process currently in place for the particular religious institute. The Major Superior would be asked to keep the Victims' Assistance Coordinator informed as to each step in the process.

If a Major Superior chooses to pursue the matter according to the Archdiocesan process, this investigation may be done in consultation with the Victims' Assistance Coordinator. The Major Superior will coordinate the external investigation. This investigation is to include speaking with the accused, the accuser, the family of the accuser, and other appropriate persons, whenever possible. Legal advice, both civil and canonical, shall be obtained promptly.

Other appropriate action may be taken to protect the accuser, the accused, or other affected persons during the investigation. The accused is to be counseled that he is not to confront or challenge his accuser, nor is he to arrange for any confrontation or challenge in any way by another person, nor is he to retaliate against his accuser in any way.

If the member of the religious institute admits the allegations, or if the allegations are proven, he/she is to be removed immediately from active ministry.

If the member of the religious institute denies the allegation, but the allegations are serious and the evidence warrants it, the member of the religious institute will ordinarily be asked by the Archbishop to take an administrative leave from ministry in the Archdiocese pending further investigation. Further decisions concerning his/her active ministry in the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities are to be made thereafter.

An administrative leave may be imposed by the Archbishop of New Orleans. Such action does not imply guilt on the part of the accused.

Once this recommendation has been received from the religious congregation, the Archbishop of New Orleans will meet personally with the Major Superior of the religious institute and also with the accused member of the religious institute. The Superior of the religious institute will then take appropriate action.

The religious institute shall be expected to provide appropriate pastoral care for the accuser and the accused.

X. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OTHER PERSONS WHO SERVE THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

- A. If the report alleges sexual abuse, other physical abuse, or neglect of a minor by any person who serves the Archdiocese of New Orleans or its related entities, including volunteers other than a priest, deacon, or member of a religious institute, the Executive Director of the department under which he/she serves, or his/her delegate (the Victims' Assistance Coordinator), shall conduct an investigation. Legal advice, both civil and canonical, shall be obtained promptly. The Victims' Assistance Coordinator shall inform the Vicar General of the allegation as well.

Other appropriate action may be taken to protect the accuser, the accused, or other affected persons during the investigation. The accused is to be counseled that he is not to confront or challenge his accuser, nor is he to arrange for any confrontation or challenge in any way by another person, nor is he to retaliate against his accuser in any way.

When allegations of sexual abuse, other physical abuse, or neglect of minors are made, the Executive Director or delegate shall contact the accuser, the family of the accuser, the accused, and other appropriate persons, including civil authorities as required by law.

If the Executive Director deems it appropriate, the accused will be immediately relieved of any position in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and placed on administrative leave, pending the outcome of the internal investigation and any outside investigation. Administrative leave does not imply guilt on the part of the accused.

The Executive Director is responsible for making certain that pastoral care is offered to others as appropriate.

After adequate and appropriate investigation, the Executive Director shall make a determination about the validity of the allegation and take appropriate action, up to and including termination of employment.

Any person who admits to, does not contest, or is found guilty of an incident of sexual abuse, other physical abuse, or neglect of a minor shall be immediately terminated from service within the Archdiocese of New Orleans and its related entities.

- B. The alleged victim, whether a minor or a major, is to be encouraged to contact the Victims' Assistance Coordinator. The person is also encouraged to make a report to the civil authorities.

The Victims' Assistance Coordinator will immediately report the allegations to the Vicar General.

The Victims' Assistance Coordinator will give a written report to the Vicar General and to the Archbishop indicating:

- a. That the individual making the allegation has been asked if he/she has reported the allegation to civil authorities or if they would want the Archdiocese to do so.
- b. The Victims' Assistance Coordinator will respect the desires of the accuser who is now a major, taking into consideration the rights of the accuser to privacy and the present status and circumstances of the accused.
- c. That the accuser has been offered counseling.

The Archbishop will determine whether to hire an external investigator to conduct an in-depth investigation.

The Victims' Assistance Coordinator will report to the Vicar General, who will consult with the Archbishop, the outcome of the investigation and his/her recommendation regarding action taken and/or to be taken in the case. The Archbishop may place the person on administrative leave and mandated reports will be made when appropriate.

XI. MEDIA CONTACT AND INQUIRIES

Any media contact or inquires regarding an incident of sexual abuse, other physical abuse, or neglect of a minor by those who serve the Archdiocese of New Orleans must be directed to the Director of Communications.

Within the confines of respect for the privacy of the individuals involved, the Archdiocese of New Orleans pledges itself to deal as openly as possible with the members of the Church and the broader community about any incident of sexual abuse, other physical abuse, or neglect of minors.

XII. RECORDS

Records maintained concerning each incident reported, the investigation, and the results of the investigation shall be kept “confidential” pursuant to Canon Law (c. 489).

SUMMARY OF LOUISIANA CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORTING LAW (L.S.A.-R.S. 14:403; LA. CHILDREN’S CODE ARTS. 601-616)

Criminal statute L.S.A.-R.S.14:403 specifies that any person in the Children’s Code who is required to report abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse of a child under age 18, is to report information to authorities when that person has cause to believe a child’s physical or mental health or welfare is endangered. Willful and knowing failure to report can result in \$500.00 fine or imprisonment for six (6) months, or both.

La. Children’s Code Art. 603 defines those persons who must report child abuse as mandatory reporters, which include: any person who provides health care services, e.g., doctors, nurses, technicians; mental health or social services professionals who provide counseling services to a child or his/her family; members of the clergy; teaching or child care providers; law enforcement officers and commercial film processors.

Art. 603 (13) (c) provides an exception to the mandatory reporting requirement for a “Member of the Clergy.” He is not required to report a confidential communication, i.e., “one made privately and not intended for further disclosure except to the persons present in furtherance of the communication from a person,” if the member of the clergy, in the course of the discipline or practice of that church, denomination, or organization, is authorized or accustomed to hearing confidential communications, and under the discipline or tenets of the church, denomination, or organization has a duty to keep such communications confidential. In that instance, the member of the clergy shall encourage that person to report the allegations to the appropriate authorities.

Art. 610 is the reporting procedure that requires mandatory reporters to immediately report to the local child protection unit of Department of Social Services in cases where the abuser is believed to be a parent, caretaker, a person who maintains an interpersonal dating or engagement relationship with the parent or caretaker, or a person living in the same residence with the parent or caretaker as spouse whether married or not. If such a person or caretaker is not believed to have any responsibility for the abuse or neglect, the report should be immediately made to the appropriate local or state law enforcement agency. Dual reportings shall be permitted.

The initial report may be verbal, and should contain the following information, if known:

- (1) name, address, age, sex and race of the child;
- (2) nature, extent and cause of child’s injuries or endangered condition, including any previous known or suspected abuse to the child or child’s siblings;
- (3) name and address of parent(s) or caretaker;
- (4) names and ages of all other members of child’s household;’
- (5) name and address of the reporter;
- (6) account of how child came to reporter’s attention;
- (7) explanation of the cause of child’s injury or condition offered by child, the caretaker of any other person;
- (8) any other information which the reporter believes might be important or relevant.

If the initial report is verbal, it shall be followed by a written report within five (5) days to the appropriate agency, i.e., local child protection unit or law enforcement agency.

Article 611 grants immunity from civil or criminal liability to any reporter, for the making of any report in good faith, and without knowledge of the falsity of such information, or reckless disregard for the truth of the report.

Telephone Numbers for Reporting:

If allegation is against a member of a child's household:

Call the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
1-855-4LA-KIDS (1-855-452-5437)
(This is a toll free number.)

If the allegation is against someone who is not a member of the child's household:

Call the police in the civil parish in which the child resides.