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ACS Family Advocacy Program (FAP) Article: "How To Report Child Abuse or Neglect In the Military"

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# How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect in the Military

Everyone has a role to play in creating safe and healthy communities. This is particularly true when it comes to the health and safety of children. Community members can look out for children by being informed, attentive and supportive.

An **estimated one in four children** have experienced abuse or neglect at some point in their lives. Child abuse and neglect pose a serious public health problem. But it is also preventable. Community members can help by sharing tips for **safe parenting practices** within their community and, if needed, recognizing the **warning signs** as well. These **parenting resources** may also assist you.

Making a call to your nearest **Family Advocacy Program** office or contacting Child Protective Services takes courage. But it could ultimately protect a child and connect their parents with the services they need to reduce stress and build and maintain healthy relationships. Commanders and their chains of command have a duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect. But children should be able to count on all military community members to report suspected abuse to help keep them safe.

## Help Prevent Child Abuse

Learn how to be a trusted adult to help protect children and teens from abuse.



The following information will tell you how to find help if you suspect a child is being abused, and what happens after a report.

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## How to report child abuse or neglect

Federal law defines child abuse and neglect as, “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical injury or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents imminent risk of serious harm.”

Depending on the situation, you may report child abuse or neglect to one or more of the following organizations:

- **911 or the military police:** If you are a witness to a concerning incident or have reason to believe a child is in immediate danger, call 911 or your installation’s law enforcement office.
- **Family Advocacy Program:** If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call your nearest **Family Advocacy Program office** or contact Child Welfare Services. Each installation that supports military families will have a FAP point of contact for child welfare and safety. The number is available at your installation’s **Military and Family Support Center** and is generally listed on installation websites and throughout the military community.
- **Child Welfare Services:** When you report an incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to FAP, it will automatically contact the Child Welfare Services agency closest to your installation. Each state has its own civilian office dedicated to child welfare services. A comprehensive list of child welfare agencies for each state can be found at [ChildWelfare.gov](http://ChildWelfare.gov).
- **FBI Cyber Tip Line for suspected online child sexual exploitation:** If you are concerned that a child is being exploited online, call the FBI Cyber Tip Line, operated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, at 800-843-5678. You can learn more **about preventive practices for your child’s online safety here**.
- **Other resources:** You can also call **your state’s child abuse reporting hotline** or call or text the **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline** at 800-422-4453.

## Assessing reports of child abuse

When you call to report suspected abuse or neglect, you will need to provide identifying information. Although reports of child abuse or neglect can be made anonymously, the contact information of the reporting person is almost always collected for follow-up purposes. Here are the steps that follow a report:

- **Initial screening:** The person taking the report will assess the immediate safety and welfare of the child based on the information given by the caller. If Child Welfare Services learns that the call involves a military family, CWS staff will often contact the installation Family Advocacy Program. If FAP staff receives your call, they will contact the appropriate Child Protective Services office.

- **Installation involvement:** When FAP staff receive a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, they will first make a plan to ensure the immediate safety and well-being of the child. Also, they will notify the commander of the child's active-duty parent or parents, law enforcement, a medical treatment facility and Child Welfare Services. These players work as a team to ensure that children are protected and that the family receives the services needed to build and maintain healthy relationships.

## How DOD-sponsored facilities and activities are made safe for children

The Defense Department makes every effort to promote the safety and well-being of children at its facilities by requiring:

- **Background screening/checks:** All volunteers in positions that involve regular contact with children, such as those who are part of a child development center staff, are required to complete a thorough background check prior to having unsupervised contact with children.
- **Staff training:** All staff and volunteers are required to complete training before being involved with facilities and programs designed for children.
- **Child Abuse Report Line:** The Defense Department has a designated line, 877-790-1197, 571-372-5348 OCONUS, for reporting suspicions of child abuse in DOD child and youth programs or sanctioned activities.

All adults in the military community play an important role in supporting the safety of children and youth. If you have a reason to suspect child abuse or neglect, call your nearest Family Advocacy Program office, which can advise you on next steps.

Source: [Reporting Child Abuse in the Military | Military OneSource](#)

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