

SUPPORTING FAMILIES & PROTECTING CHILDREN: REPORTING ABUSE, PROVIDING SUPPORT, AND RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

Keeping children safe is very important in Rhode Island. According to state law, everyone must report any known or suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) within 24 hours. Reports can come from anyone, like the public, courts, hospitals, police, parents, and relatives.

What is Reportable Abuse or Neglect?

- **Intentional harm:** This includes physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or not providing basic needs like food, shelter, or medical care.
- **Putting a child at risk:** Leaving a child in dangerous situations.

What is Neglect vs. Poverty?

- A family that is struggling financially might not have fancy clothes or a lot of food, but if they provide the basics and a safe home, that is not neglect. Instead, support the family by calling DCYF's Support and Response Unit (SRU) at 1-888-RI-FAMILY (1-888-743-2689) - Available Monday thru Friday 8:30-4:00 PM.

What is Abuse vs. Cultural Differences?

Every family has its own way of raising children. In Rhode Island, we believe in positive reinforcement and healthy development. Different cultures can affect parenting styles:

- **Discipline:** Some cultures may use loud voices or gestures that seem unusual. It's important to consider if this puts the child at risk or if it's a cultural method used properly.
- **Living Arrangements:** A crowded home may look different but doesn't mean neglect if it is clean and safe.

When to Report

You should report suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours if:

- A child shows signs of physical or emotional harm.
- Their basic needs aren't being met regularly.
- You think the child is in danger.

If You Have Concerns

If you see something that worries you about a child's safety, please report it. DCYF will investigate carefully to see if the child is in danger.

How to Report

- **RI Child Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-RI-CHILD (1-800-742-4453) - Available 24/7, and you can report anonymously.
- **Learn more:** Check the [DCYF website](#).

Understanding Support for Families

By understanding these factors, we can help make sure all children, no matter their race or background, can stay with their families when it's safe:

- Having low income doesn't mean a family is neglecting their child.
- Many reports are about families needing more help, which can often be fixed with community support.
- Families of color may be afraid to ask for help because of past experiences.
- Understanding cultural differences helps us support families better.

DCYF's goal is to keep all children safe and to be sensitive to different cultures in its investigations. Together, we can create a safe and supportive environment for all children in Rhode Island.

