

## **State of Florida Department of Children and Families Child Abuse Statues**

As described in Chapter 415, Florida Statutes, (F.S.), the Florida Department of Children & Families is charged with providing comprehensive protective services for abused or neglected children found in the state by requiring that reports of each abused or neglected child be made to the Florida Abuse Hotline. In taking action to prevent further harm to the child or any other children living in the home, the Department of Children & Families must preserve the family life of the parents and children, to the maximum extent possible, by enhancing the parental capacity for adequate child care. Law enforcement is to take the lead in all criminal investigations and prosecution.

### ***A. The Florida Abuse Hotline will accept a report when:***

1. There is *reasonable cause to suspect* that a **child** (less than 18 years old)
2. who can be **located in Florida**, or is temporarily out of the state but expected to return in the immediate future,
3. has been **harmed or** is believed to be **threatened with harm**
4. from **a person responsible for the care of the child**.

### ***B. Definition of Caretaker Responsible:***

Every child should expect to be safe and protected when in the care of:

1. a **PARENT**, even if the parent is a minor; or
2. an **ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBER** found in the home continually or at regular intervals; or
3. **ANOTHER ADULT** who has been **entrusted with**, or voluntarily **assumed responsibility** for the care of the child; or.
4. **ANOTHER CHILD** who is an **employee or volunteer** of a daycare, private school, agency, summer camp or similar facility when given sole responsibility for the care of the child.

### ***C. Description of Harm:***

**ABUSE:** Non-accidental infliction of physical or psychological injury or sexual abuse by a parent, adult household member, or other person responsible for care of the child.

**NEGLECT:** Failure/omission by a caretaker to provide the care, supervision, services or protection necessary to maintain physical and mental health.

**THREATENED HARM:** A situation, circumstances or behavior which leads a prudent person to have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect has occurred or may occur in the immediate future if no intervention is provided.

Appendix I: State of Florida DCF – Child Abuse statues