

## GSCB Volunteer Mandated Reporter Policy and Procedures

### Definitions

**Child Abuse:** Although there are many formal and acceptable definitions of child abuse, the following is offered as a guide on child abuse and neglect: “Child Abuse and Neglect” means, at a minimum, any act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

**Mandated Reporter:** An individual who is required to report to the appropriate state agency cases of child abuse that they have reasonable cause to suspect.

**Person with Direct Knowledge:** The person who has the most direct knowledge of the abuse or suspected abuse. No individual with knowledge of child abuse or neglect should rely on another individual with less direct knowledge to call the Report Line. When multiple people have joint knowledge of alleged abuse/neglect, the report may be made by one person, but all persons with knowledge must be listed in the report.

**“In good faith”:** Only a “reasonable suspicion” is necessary to make a report. You do not have to have proof, evidence, or a written statement to report abuse or suspected abuse.

### GSCB Policy and State Mandated Reporter designations:

#### **Training Requirements:**

All GSCB Volunteers who interact with Girl Scouts recognize that they are responsible for protecting the well-being of girl members by reporting any witnessed or suspected abuse or neglect. **Therefore, Mandated Reporter Training for recognizing and reporting child abuse is required for ALL GSCB volunteer positions to be refreshed on an annual basis.**

#### **Reporting Requirements:**

While the legal definition of a Mandated Reporter may vary from state-to-state, GSCB holds our volunteers to the highest expectation to protect our girl members.

- Delaware Law: All persons who suspect child abuse or neglect must make an immediate report to the 24-hour Division of Family Services (DFS) Child Abuse and Neglect Report line. A Law Enforcement Agency or 911 may also be contacted, but not in lieu of contacting DFS.
- Maryland Law: Mandated Reporters are listed as health practitioners, police officers, educators, or human service workers, however, it is stated in law that any person who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect shall notify the local social service department or the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- Virginia Law: Any persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, shall report the matter immediately to the local county/city social service department or VA Statewide CPS Hotline no later than 24 hrs.

**GSCB expects all volunteers to report abuse or suspected abuse involving Girl Scout members to the appropriate state agency within 24 hours first, and then to subsequently report to GSCB as defined in the Procedure below.**

#### **Failure to report:**

While state laws may vary, possible penalties for failures to report may include investigation by the Department of Justice as well as Civil Penalties and/or fines. (see below for state specific penalties)

## Procedure to Report Abuse or Suspected Abuse:

### **Information Gathering Do's and Don'ts:**

- Do:
  - Use Minimal Fact questions
    - What? Ask open-ended questions to help the child tell his/her story, and begin your questioning with the phrase "I notice \_\_\_\_."
    - Who? If the child discloses abuse or neglect, it is okay to ask the question– who did that to you? Get the full name of the alleged perpetrator and ask if there are other victims or witnesses.
    - Where? Helps determine legal jurisdiction so that the appropriate police department can be notified.
    - When? Relates to the need (or not) for a medical exam (i.e. evidence collection)
  - Affirmations are critical: "I believe you", "This is not your fault", "Thank you for telling me"
  - Acknowledge their courage for sharing
  - React responsibly. Remain calm.
  - Listen more than you talk.
  - MAKE A REPORT! Report exactly what was disclosed.
- Don't:
  - Overreact
  - Interrogate– if more information is needed, use Minimal Fact questions and ask open-ended questions
  - Offer gap-fillers. Listen.
  - Shut the child down.
  - Never promise confidentiality– tell them it is your job to protect them.
  - Take pictures of the injuries.
  - Ask the child to undress.
  - Notify the caregiver that you are making a report.

### **Reporting to the State:**

In compliance with GSCB Policy and state laws, GSCB volunteers as the person with direct knowledge, who know of or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect shall make a report to the appropriate state agency within 24 hours of discovery of the abuse or suspected abuse (or 911 if the child is in immediate danger) as listed in the Procedure section below. The location of the appropriate agency will be identified as the location that the abuse or neglect is to have occurred. If the specific location of the abuse is unknown, the volunteer shall report to the state of residence, and the agency will follow up as needed.

- DE: DSCYF [ISeeTheSigns.com](http://ISeeTheSigns.com)
- MD: [Child Protective Services](#)
- VA: [Virginia Department of Social Services](#)

Even when the alleged victim or caregiver is saying that the incident was reported previously, a report should still be made for the following reasons:

- Self-assurance that the incident is reported
- Protection against a potential failure to report claim
- Additional or clarifying information not previously provided to Report Line

### **Reporting to GSCB:**

The volunteer or person with direct knowledge shall first make the official report to the state as listed above. In the case that Girl Scout members are involved, the volunteer must subsequently report the abuse or suspected abuse to GSCB via the [GSCB Mandated Report Notification](#) form. GSCB will then, in compliance with Institutional Responsibility Laws, make an additional report to the appropriate state agency based on the information that is provided in this form.