

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina

Third Edition 2013

Janet Mason



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Contents

Preface ix

PART 1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Purposes of the Reporting Law 3

Notes 7

Chapter 2

History of the Reporting Law 9

Background 9

North Carolina Law 10

Current Law 12

Notes 12

PART 2. KEY DEFINITIONS

Chapter 3

Significance of the Definitions	17
Notes	18

Chapter 4

The People Defined: Juvenile, Parent, Guardian, Custodian, and Caretaker	21
Which Children Are Covered?	21
Whose Conduct Is Covered?	22
Notes	26

Chapter 5

The Conditions Defined: Neglect, Abuse, Dependency, and Maltreatment	29
Neglect	31
Lack of Proper Care and Supervision	31
Inappropriate Discipline	32
Abandonment	33
Lack of Necessary Medical or Remedial Care	34
Injurious Environment	36
Illegal Placement	37
Abuse	39
Causing or Allowing Serious Injury	40
Cruelty	40
Sexual Abuse	41
Emotional Abuse	43
Contributing to Delinquency	44
Dependency	44
Maltreatment	45
Difficulty in Applying the Definitions—An Example	46
Notes	49

PART 3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF REPORTERS

Chapter 6

Who Must Report	57
General Rule	57
Confidential and Privileged Communications	58
Attorneys	58
Judges	59
Religious Officials	61
Researchers	62
Summary	63
Notes	64

Chapter 7

Deciding to Report	67
Cause to Suspect	67
Guidelines	69
Notes	71

Chapter 8

How to Report	73
What to Include	74
Anonymous Reports	74
Reports by Institutions	75
Reports about a Child in Another State	75
Reports about Missing Children	76
Notes	77

Chapter 9

Legal Rights of the Reporter	79
Confidentiality	79
Immunity for Reporting, Cooperating, or Testifying	81
Notification and Review	82
Notes	84

Chapter 10

- Consequences of Failing to Report** 87
 - Criminal Liability** 87
 - Civil Liability** 88
 - Other Consequences of Failing to Report** 90
 - Notes** 91

PART 4. ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE

Chapter 11

- Social Services Procedures** 97
 - Screening** 97
 - Notification after a Report Is Made** 99
 - Notifying the Reporter 99
 - Notifying Law Enforcement 100
 - Notification When Report Involves Child Care 100
 - Social Services Assessment** 101
 - Purpose of Assessment 101
 - Starting the Assessment 101
 - Steps in an Assessment 102
 - Confidential Information 103
 - Assessment Following a Child’s Death 104
 - Assessment in an Institutional Setting 104
 - Law Enforcement’s Role** 105
 - Social Services Action** 105
 - Immediate Removal of Child 105
 - Protective Services 106
 - Keeping the Family Together 106
 - Notification Requirements at Conclusion of Assessment** 108
 - To the Reporter 108
 - To the Parent, Guardian, Custodian, or Caretaker 109
 - To the Central Registry 109
 - To a Responsible Individual and the Responsible Individuals List 110
 - To the State Department of Health and Human Services and the State Bureau of Investigation When a Child Care Facility Is Involved 111
 - Confidentiality and Information Sharing** 112
 - Confidentiality Rule 112
 - When Disclosure Is Allowed 112
 - Notes** 114

Chapter 12

Review Procedures	119
Review of Decision to Screen Out a Report	119
Informal Review of Department's Determination after an Assessment	120
Formal Review of Case Decisions	120
Requesting Formal Review	121
Timing of Review	121
Review Process and Conclusion	122
Review of Agency Practices or Community Issues	122
County Social Services Boards	122
State Division of Social Services	123
Community Child Protection Teams	123
Notes	125

Chapter 13

Juvenile Court Procedures	127
Abuse, Neglect, or Dependency Petition	127
Prehearing Custody	128
Court Representation	130
Child's Guardian ad Litem	130
Representation for Parents	131
Stages in Juvenile Cases	131
Adjudication	131
Disposition	132
Review Hearings	133
Authority over Parents	133
Notes	134

PART 5. ROLE OF OTHER AGENCIES

Chapter 14

Schools and School Personnel	139
Reports to Social Services by School Personnel	139
Cooperative Agreements	142
Sample Provisions for Cooperative Agreements	143
Reporting in Relation to License Suspension and Revocation	146
Reporting Certain Criminal Acts	147
Notes	148

Chapter 15

Health and Mental Health Professionals and Facilities	151
Reporting	151
Professional Ethics and Reporting Responsibilities	152
“Baby Doe”: Disabled Infants with Life-Threatening Conditions	155
Substance-Exposed Infants	156
Emergency Custody in Abuse Cases	158
Procedures	158
Time Limits and Juvenile Court Action	159
Treating Child without Parent’s Consent	160
Judicial Authority for Emergency Medical Treatment When Parent Objects	161
Child Medical Evaluation Program/ Child Family Evaluation Program	163
Notes	163

Conclusion 167

Appendix A. Articles 1 and 3 of the North Carolina Juvenile Code 169

Appendix B. Selected Internet Sites	189
North Carolina—Governmental	189
North Carolina—Non-Governmental	191
Federal and National	191

Preface

The material in this book reflects legislative changes to the North Carolina Juvenile Code through the 2013 session of the North Carolina General Assembly. Since publication of the 2003 edition of this book, the reporting law itself has been amended twice. In 2005, the word “assessment” replaced the term “investigation” to describe actions taken by a county department of social services when it receives a report of suspected abuse, neglect, dependency, or death by maltreatment. In 2013, the legislature for the first time provided criminal penalties for knowingly or wantonly failing to make a report, or preventing someone else from making a report, when the statute requires one. Changes in related laws and some court decisions also contribute to the need for this new edition.

This book should be a useful reference for teachers, counselors, principals, and other school personnel; mental health professionals; nurses, doctors, and other medical personnel; law enforcement officials; child care providers; and social workers. But the information in this book is important for everyone in North Carolina, regardless of profession, because the reporting law it discusses applies to everyone. The book may be useful as a training aid. It focuses on the law, however, and does not attempt to address such topics as medical and psychological indicators of abuse and neglect. Those subjects also should be considered critical components of training in this area.

The purposes of the book are

- to help readers understand when they are required to make reports;
- to explain how to make a report—both when the law requires that a report be made and when, even though a report is not required legally, a person feels that one should be made;
- to describe what happens after someone makes a report;
- to answer some of the questions people ask frequently about the reporting law; and
- to provide broader access to the exact wording of the reporting law and related statutes.

Readers should recognize that while the laws relating to child abuse and neglect are important, these are not primarily legal problems. Neither are they problems that can be addressed solely through county social services departments and the juvenile courts. This book is written with the hope that those who read it will be better informed about the reporting law and more aware that the responsibility for protecting children belongs to whole communities.

A grant from the Governor’s Crime Commission of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety provided financial support for the production and distribution of this book. The School of Government greatly appreciates the commission’s contribution to making this information widely available in the state. Many School of Government staff members contributed to the production of this book. If I tried to name them all I surely would omit someone whose contributions have been critical. All of them have my deep appreciation.

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