

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT IN MASSACHUSETTS

01.

Recognize the Signs

Before making a report, pay attention to:

- Unexplained injuries, behavioral shifts, or fearful behavior after visits
- Disclosures made by the child, even if subtle or unclear
- Regressive behaviors (e.g., bedwetting, self-harm, aggression)
- Missed appointments, unsafe home conditions, or known substance use

 Tip: Document what you observe using specific facts, quotes, and dates.

Know When to Report

Massachusetts law requires you to report when:

- You have reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected
- A child discloses something that concerns their safety or well-being
- You observe warning signs and suspect risk, even without direct proof

 Mandated reporters (foster parents, teachers, medical professionals, etc.) are legally obligated to file a report when these conditions are met.

02.

How to File a Report

Call Immediately:

- DCF Child Protection Hotline (24/7):
1-800-792-5200
- OR call the local DCF Area Office directly during business hours if you know the child's assigned office.

Submit a Written Report:

- Within 48 hours, mandated reporters must file a written 51A report ([click here for link](#)).
- You can get the form here: [Massachusetts 51A Report Form \(PDF\)](#)
- Submit the form to the DCF office you called. Keep a copy for your records.

 Optional: You may remain anonymous if you are not a mandated reporter.

03.

What Happens After Reporting

- DCF will screen the report and decide whether to open an investigation.
- You may not be informed of the outcome due to confidentiality.
- If your concern is dismissed and you still believe the child is unsafe, you may escalate your concern (see Section: How to Escalate a Concern).
- Keep documenting everything — including your report and any DCF responses.

04.