

Mandatory Reporting and Teen Dating Violence

What is a mandated reporter?

A mandated reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities.

What you need to know:

When it comes to mandated reporting, **every state is different**. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to many questions that may come up with this topic. All states have statutes identifying those who are required to report suspected child maltreatment to an appropriate agency, such as Child Protective Services, a law enforcement agency, or a state's toll-free child abuse reporting hotline.

Check your state's statutes on mandated reporting here:

www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/

To better understand this issue, and to view statutes across states, [click here](#) (PDF).

Am I a mandated reporter?

Chances are, if you are working in a school or organization that specifically works with youth, you are considered a mandated reporter. Mandated reporters include school administrators, teachers, counselors, and social workers. If you have questions about your status as a mandated reporter, ask your principal or supervisor.

Legally, what do mandated reporters have to report, and to whom?

Generally, mandated reporters are required to report suspected abuse or known abuse of a minor or vulnerable person to an appropriate agency. Depending on the state, abuse can include emotional, physical, or sexual abuse at the hands of a parent, trusted adult, **OR** a peer the minor may be dating. Mandated reporters do not have the burden of providing proof that abuse or neglect has occurred. Again, each state is different, so check with your state's Child Protective Services office or the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) to verify what you need to report.

How does mandated reporting relate to implementing Take A Stand for Healthy Relationships in my classroom?

As you may have already gathered, addressing the topic of healthy teen relationships and teen dating violence in your classroom can mean touching on sensitive topics that students may have dealt with or are still experiencing. It is possible that a student could disclose sensitive information to you, and it is important that you feel empowered to know how to deal with this information.

The possibility of having to report sounds scary. I want to protect myself and the confidentiality of my students.

How do I support my student while creating boundaries that help them, and myself, remain protected?

We want to make sure that you and your students are protected, so we have a few guidelines that may help you along the way.

First: At the beginning of each lesson, remind students of your status as a mandated reporter, along with the implications of that role. For example, you can say:

"Before we begin, let me remind you that I am a mandated reporter. Because of this, the law requires me to make a report of any suspected child abuse. If you tell me someone is hurting you, I may need to report to people in authority

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who can make it stop. If you are being hurt by anyone, I may have to report that. The law says that I must do this in order to protect you from further harm. I do have access to organizations that you can get help from without necessarily having child welfare involved."

Here is a link to additional resources for help: <http://www.teens4healthyrelationships.org/resources>.

Second: Give students options to share information in a way that does not require your legal action as a mandated reporter. Below is an example of what you can say:

"Before you share anything with the class, consider a few things. 1) If you share this, will I, as your teacher, have to act as a mandated reporter? 2) If you share this, does it further our conversation in a productive way? Or, will it OUT someone else here at school, or put them in danger? 3) Is there a way you can protect the confidentiality of yourself or your friend by not naming names, such as by starting with, 'A friend of mine,' or 'Someone I know,' or 'A few years ago,'."

Third: If a student begins to disclose sensitive information, either in front of the class or with you, stop them and ask if they are sure they want to disclose this information to you. If they begin to share publicly, think about stopping them from doing so, and suggest they speak to you privately.

Finally: Make your school's social worker or psychologist aware of the topics you are covering, and have regular conversations with them about the conversations that are coming up in your classes.

If a student tells me that they are being abused by someone they are in a relationship with, shouldn't I just call the police or Child Protective Services (CPS)?

Calling the police or CPS when dating violence is disclosed may seem like the most reasonable thing to do to protect the student experiencing abuse, but doing so could actually put that individual in more danger with their abuser.

Here is what you can do: We recommend calling the teen dating hotline loveisrespect.org at 1-866-331-9474 for advice about how to respond carefully and support and protect the person being abused. Check out our information sheet, "[What to do if my student is experiencing dating abuse](#)" for more advice regarding how to respond or direct them to the [organizations found here](#). Also visit this page for information on [other organizations](#) that address a multitude of issues outside of domestic abuse.