

# Take Five

## How to be a Mandatory Supporter and Prevent Over and False Reporting

Before making a report to DCYF, take a few moments to understand the family's full story and the impact this will have on them.

### Ways you can support instead of report

#### Does the family need economic support?

Share information and encourage access to financial assistance programs. This might include:

- Family Resource Centers
- Diaper Banks
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

#### Is the parent overly stressed?

Recommend parenting classes or counseling resources like:

- Family Resource Centers
- Local Parent 2 Parent program
- Parent Trust
- Help Me Grow

#### Is the child showing changes in behavior or minor injuries from accidents?

They may need a medical referral or follow up with a school counselor or child psychologist for guidance or a medical provider.

Check out Seattle Children's Mental Health Referral Service for Children and Youth at [www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/washington-mental-health-referral-service](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/washington-mental-health-referral-service)

### Protective Factors to Reduce Abuse and Neglect

The Strengthening Families Protective Factors is a research-informed approach made up of five key factors.

Helping families to build these factors makes them stronger, improves child development, and reduces the risk of child abuse and neglect. If the parent is struggling with any of these factors, try connecting them with resources.



**Knowledge of Parenting and of Child/Youth Development:** Does the parent know where to go to find out about parenting skills and child developmental growth?



**Concrete Supports:** Does the parent know where to turn for help?



**Parental Resilience:** Has the parent overcome hard times?



**Social Connections:** Does the parent have people who know and support them?



**Social and Emotional Development:** Does the parent know how to help children talk about their feelings?



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## Resources

- For a list of ways to support visit:  
<https://dcyf.wa.gov/safety/mandatory-reporter-resources>
- To connect families with resources, share DCYF's Basic Needs Community Resource Directory:  
<https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/housing-basic-needs/basic-needs-community-resource-directory>

### Mandatory Reporter Toolkit



View the full Mandatory Reporter Toolkit by visiting <https://dcyf.wa.gov/safety/mandated-reporter> or scanning the QR code.

## How to Prevent Over and False Reporting

**False reporting** occurs when misleading, exaggerated, or wrong information is reported on purpose or by accident.

### Examples

- Making a false statement on purpose
- Reporting information that was not fact-checked
- Exaggeration or distortion i.e. amplifying information to create unnecessary concern or misinformation
- Reporting misinformation, whether that's due to carelessness, bias, or harmful intent

**Overreporting happens when an issue is reported excessively or inaccurately, leading to:**

- Skewed perceptions that misrepresent reality.
- Unnecessary alarm that leads to misinformed actions.
- Unequal impacts, especially on disenfranchised communities, such as Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families.

### Common Causes of False or Overreporting:

- Lack of information or understanding.
- Bias or assumptions turning assumptions into "fact."
- Sharing false information for personal gain.

### Consequences:

- Legal penalties (RCW 9A.84.040).
- Emotional and financial stress on families involved.
- Liability concerns for individuals and organizations.

### Preventing False Reporting

- Make sure facts are accurate before making statements.
- Avoid assumptions and separate rumors/theories from facts.
- Encourage accurate and ethical reporting.
- Raise awareness about the legal and social impacts of false and overreporting.

