

Mandated Reporting in California

Legal Obligations, Identifying Abuse, and Reporting Procedures Under CANRA (Penal Code § 11164 et seq.)

August 17th, 2026



Legal Foundation: CANRA & AB 1432

CANRA Framework

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Act

Codified under California Penal Code §§ 11164-11174.3, CANRA mandates specific professionals to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect to protective agencies. The primary legislative intent is to protect children from abuse and neglect through early identification and immediate protective intervention.

AB 1432 Requirement

Annual Mandatory Training

California Assembly Bill 1432 requires all school employees to complete annual mandated reporter training within the first 6 weeks of each school year. Ensures every employee understands their individual legal duties, indicators of abuse, and explicit steps for filing reports.

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

-  **All Certificated & Classified Employees:** Teachers, instructional aides, administrative staff, administrators, counselors, school nurses, librarians, and cafeteria workers (Penal Code § 11165.7).
-  **Operational & Support Personnel:** Bus drivers, maintenance personnel, custodians, daycare/after-school workers, and athletic coaches (paid or volunteer).
-  **Contractors & Regular Volunteers:** Any contractor or volunteer whose duties require regular direct contact with or supervision of pupils outside parent supervision.
-  **Individual Legal Responsibility:** You are designated as a mandated reporter by law, not by job title preference. Status begins immediately upon employment or service.

Standard: Reasonable Suspicion



0%

Proof or Certainty Required

What Is "Reasonable Suspicion"?

Under Penal Code § 11166(a)(1), reasonable suspicion means it is **objectively reasonable** for a person to entertain a suspicion based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position to suspect abuse.

Key Rule for School Staff:

- You do NOT need proof or certainty.
- You are strictly **prohibited from investigating** or interviewing the child/family yourself.
- Investigating is the sole legal responsibility of CPS and Law Enforcement.

Categories of Child Abuse



Physical Abuse

Non-accidental physical injury or bodily punishment. Look for unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, or inconsistent injury explanations.



Neglect (Severe / General)

Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, or medical care. Observe chronic severe hygiene issues or extreme malnutrition.



Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

Sexual assault, molestation, exploitation, or exposure. Watch for inappropriate sexual knowledge, sudden behavioral regression, or trauma indicators.



Emotional Abuse & Harm

Willful harming or endangering a child's health or emotional well-being, severe corporal punishment, or exposure to severe domestic violence.

Examples & Warning Signs of Abuse

Physical Abuse Indicators

- Unexplained or repeated injuries (bruises, burns, fractures)
- Injuries in shapes resembling objects (belts, handprints, cords)
- Inconsistent, evolving, or improbable explanations for trauma
- Child wears concealing clothing inappropriate for the weather

Signs of Neglect

- Chronic poor hygiene, unwashed clothes, or severe body odor
- Consistent hunger, hoarding food, or extreme malnutrition
- Lack of appropriate clothing for cold or wet weather conditions
- Unattended medical or dental needs, or frequent school absences

Emotional Abuse Warning Signs

- Extreme behaviors (highly aggressive, demanding, or extremely passive)
- Sudden, severe behavioral changes or developmental regressions
- Excessive fear of making mistakes or intense anxiety around parents
- Habitual self-destructive behaviors, scratching, or self-harm

Other Behavior Warning Signs

- Sudden withdrawal from peers, favorite activities, and school life
- Inappropriate or highly advanced knowledge of a sexual nature
- Strong reluctance, fear, or refusal to go home after school hours
- Constant, profound fatigue or sleeping frequently during class

Making a Report: Procedures



1. Inform

Inform Patrick, Jenn, or John and consult as needed.



2. Act Quickly

Report the information immediately. Even if the information that you learn is old, you still must report.



3. Call Hotline

Call Child Protective Services Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline:

**650-802-7922
or (800)-632-4615**



4. Submit Form

Complete and submit a [Suspected Child Abuse Report](#) form within 36 hours of making the report.

Fax: 650-592-2289



5. Retain Copy

A copy of the form must go to John. It will be stored securely and kept confidentially in John's office.

Two-Step Reporting Procedure



Step 1: Immediate Phone Report

Timing: Call IMMEDIATELY or as soon as practicably possible.

Who to Call: Local County Child Protective Services (CPS) or local Police/Sheriff Department.

Note down the officer/social worker's name, call time, and badge/case number.



Step 2: Written Report (SS 8572)

Timing: Within **36 hours** of receiving or developing information.

Action: Complete and submit Official Form SS 8572 (Suspected Child Abuse Report) to the receiving agency.

Keep a confidential copy for your compliance record.

Critical Mandated Reporter Rules

Non-Negotiable Legal Directives

1. Individual Duty: Your legal obligation is personal. You cannot delegate the task of reporting to a colleague, counselor, or principal.

2. No Employer Interference: School administrators or supervisors are legally prohibited from stopping, altering, delaying, or suppressing any mandated report.

3. Immediate Action: In a small school, immediate action ensures vulnerable students receive rapid assistance from specialized protective personnel.



Internal vs. External Reporting

NOT A SUBSTITUTE

Telling School Leadership

Informing your Principal, Counselor, Superintendent, or School Nurse **does NOT fulfill** your legal reporting requirement under CANRA.

Internal notifications can happen *after* or concurrently with your call to CPS/Police, but internal reporting alone leaves you legally liable.

JOINT KNOWLEDGE RULE

Team Knowledge Protocol

When two or more staff members have joint knowledge of suspected abuse, one member may be selected by mutual agreement to file the report.

Crucial Caveat: If the designated reporter fails to report, all other team members retain full legal liability to file immediately.

Immunity & Legal Penalties

Legal Protection & Immunity

- ✓ **Absolute Immunity:** Mandated reporters have civil and criminal immunity from liability for making reports required by law.
- ✓ **Confidentiality:** Your identity is kept confidential and disclosed only to protective agencies or prosecutors.
- ✓ **Employer Retaliation:** Unlawful for employers to discipline or retaliate against a mandated reporter.

Penalties for Failure to Report

- ⚠ **Criminal Misdemeanor:** Punishable by up to 6 months in county jail and/or a \$1,000 fine (Penal Code § 11166(c)).
- ⚠ **Professional Impact:** Revocation of credential/license, loss of employment, and severe civil liability.
- ⚠ **Severe Harm Penalty:** Failure to report resulting in death or great bodily injury carries enhanced penalties.

Small School Community Dynamics



Maintain Objectivity

In small schools, staff often know families personally. Never let close community relationships or assumptions cloud your duty. Apply the objective "reasonable suspicion" standard regardless of who the family is.



Strict Confidentiality

Do not discuss reports or suspicions with colleagues in teacher breakrooms or community settings. Protect the child's dignity and preserve legal privacy by limiting discussions strictly to CPS/Law Enforcement.



Supportive Environment

Reporting abuse is an act of advocacy and safety, not punishment. Continue providing a warm, structured, and compassionate environment for the student every day at school.

Questions

Protecting children is our shared legal duty and moral responsibility.