How will I know what happens after I make a report?

You may not know, except by seeing changes in the child and family. Our laws require CPS to work under very strict confidentiality rules, for the protection of everybody involved. The workers cannot share information about the report.

You can be assured that if the hotline took your report, CPS is responding to the situation. The law requires that CPS must investigate all reports taken by the hotline. If you think the situation has not changed, or if you know of another incident of abuse or neglect, you may and should make another report to the hotline.

What else can I do if I think a parent I know is abusing or neglecting a child?

You can let the parent know that you are concerned about her or him. Realize the parent may be under stress, feeling lonely and isolated or inadequate as a parent. Offer your support. For example, give her or him a break by taking care of the children for awhile. Encourage the parent to seek other help. For example, encourage a parent who is having difficulty dealing with their children to attend a parenting class or support group.

What if I see a child being mistreated in a public place?

Don't give the parent dirty looks or make snide remarks. That may increase the parent's anger and make things worse. There are positive, supportive things you can say and do. For example, "It looks as if it's been a long day for both of you." "Children can wear you out, can't they? Is there something I can do to help?" Strike up a conversation with the adult; see if you can direct the parent's attention away from the child. Praise the child and parent at the first opportunity.

How can I find out more about child abuse and neglect?

For information about child abuse and neglect, for referrals to local organizations that help parents and children, and to find out what you can do to prevent child abuse, call Prevent Child Abuse New York's Parent Helpline. **The Parent Helpline can be reached from anywhere in New York State, toll-free, from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. (after-hours calls are forwarded to an answering service): 1-800-CHILDREN.**

To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call the New York State Child Abuse Hotline:

1-800-342-3720

Prevent Child Abuse New York

Prevent Child Abuse New York
134 South Swan Street | Albany, NY 12210
1-800-CHILDREN | 518-445-1273
www.preventchildabuseny.org
info@preventchildabuseny.org

New York State Office of Children & Family Services

New York State Office of Children & Family Services
52 Washington Street | Rensselaer, NY 12144
ocfs.ny.gov
info@ocfs.ny.gov

nycACS NYC Administration for Children's Services

NYC Administration for Children's Services
150 William Street | New York, NY 10038
www.nyc.gov/acs

Recognizing & Reporting

Child Abuse & Neglect

Questions often asked by friends, neighbors and relatives

Prevent Child Abuse New York

New York State Office of Children & Family Services

nycACS NYC Administration for Children's Services

What is child abuse? How do I recognize it?

Child abuse includes physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse of a child under 18 years of age by a parent or other caretaker.

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury to a child by a parent or caretaker. You may see frequent and unexplained bruises, burns, cuts or injuries; the child may be overly afraid of the parent's reaction to misbehavior.

Physical neglect is a parent's failure to give the child food, clothing, hygiene, medical care, or supervision. You may see a very young child routinely left alone at home. You may know that a severe illness or injury is not being medically treated. A neighbor's child may frequently turn up at your door—inadequately dressed for the weather—saying his or her parent told him or her to stay away. Physical neglect can be hard to determine: Sometimes what you see is simply poor judgment, but not neglect; sometimes what you see is the result of poverty, and not parental neglect.

Sexual abuse ranges from non-touching offenses, such as exhibitionism, to fondling, intercourse, or using the child for pornographic materials. You may see sexual behavior far beyond what is expected for the child's age; a young child might have sudden, unusual difficulty with toilet habits; there may be pain, itching, bruises or bleeding in the genital area. The child might tell you.

Emotional abuse includes severe rejection, humiliation and actions intended to produce fear or extreme guilt in a child. You may see a parent who verbally terrorizes the child, who continually and severely criticizes the child, or who fails to express any affection or nurturing.

Why should I make a report if I suspect child abuse or neglect?

The reason to make a report is to get help for the child and the family. The Child Abuse and Maltreatment Reporting Center ("the Child Abuse Hotline") will notify the local Child Protective Services (CPS), which is part of the county Department of Social Services. In New York City, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) will be notified. CPS will investigate and take needed action to protect the child and to help the parent solve problems that are leading to abuse or neglect. For example, the family may be referred to day care or homemaker services to help relieve the pressures of parenthood. CPS might suggest counseling, participation in a drug or alcohol program, or a parenting education program.

Will the child be taken away from the home if I report?

Only if the child is in immediate danger will she or he be taken into "protective custody." Removing the child from the home is not a routine occurrence. Unless the child is in serious danger, the goal is to keep the family together.

Then what does happen?

Within 24 hours of receiving a report, CPS begins an investigation. Within 60 days they must determine whether the reported suspicion is "indicated" or "unfounded." Indicated means there is evidence that the children have been abused or neglected. If abuse or maltreatment is indicated, CPS will recommend a plan for the family to protect the child and to help the parents solve problems that are leading to abuse or neglect.

Should I be certain? What if I make a mistake?

You need to have a *reasonable suspicion* of child abuse, not to prove it or be absolutely certain. You might be mistaken, but it is better to err on the side of the child. Not reporting your suspicions may mean that abuse will continue. If you make a report in good faith, you are immune from civil or criminal liability.

Do I have to give my name? If I do, will it be confidential?

Reports may be made anonymously. Although you don't have to give your name, we recommend that you do so. The CPS caseworker who will investigate the situation is not the same person—or even the same office—that takes your report. The caseworker may want to talk to you for additional information or clarification. Giving your name will assure that the worker can contact you, and that important information will not be forgotten or lost. Your name will be kept confidential. By law, CPS may not release the name of the person who made the report to the family who was reported.