PURPOSE

Pennsylvania law requires anyone with knowledge of suspected child abuse or neglect to report it to the appropriate authorities. This Policy explains when reporting is mandatory, who must report suspected abuse, and the process for reporting.

It must be emphasized that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount. Any uncertainty about whether reporting is required should always be resolved in favor of making a report.

POLICY SCOPE AND APPLICATION – The Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (the “Law”) provides the authority for these requirements. The full Law can be located at 23 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 6301.

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of Alvernia University who, in the course of their employment, come into contact with children. A “child” is any individual under 18 years of age. At Alvernia University, persons obligated to report child abuse would include, but not be limited to:

1. Licensed physicians,
2. Members of the clergy (except for confidential reports to a member of the clergy who has received the information in a manner protected by 42 Pa. Const. Stat. §5943),
3. University administrators,
4. Professors,
5. Health & Wellness Center employees,
6. Licensed mental health professionals,
7. Public Safety Office employees,
8. Individuals who may come into contact with children through camps, events management, retreats, academic presentations or other university programs
9. Anyone that comes into contact with children in the course of their employment

All mandatory reporters that have regular contact with minors must complete training on preventing and reporting suspected child abuse.

WHAT MUST BE REPORTED

Reporters must report child abuse they actually know about, see, or have reasonable cause to suspect. Child abuse means non-accidental actions or omissions that cause serious physical or mental injuries to a child, or sexual abuse/sexual exploitation of a child. This includes:

1. **Physical Abuse**: acts or omissions that cause, or fail to prevent, a serious physical injury to a child.
2. **Sexual Abuse**: this includes rape, sexual assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, or exploiting a child in a manner in which the child is used for the gratification or sexual enjoyment by another person.
3. **Emotional or Mental Abuse**: actions or omissions that have an actual or likely severe negative impact on a child’s emotional and behavioral development, including those resulting from persistent or severe emotional mistreatment.
4. **Neglect**: a severe or persistent failure to provide for a child’s physical, emotional or basic needs. However, it is not “neglect” if the actual or suspected injuries result solely from economic or environmental factors that are beyond the caretaker or parent’s control, such as inadequate housing, income, clothing, and medical care.

PROCEDURES

A reporter’s primary required action under this policy is to make a report. In deciding whether or not to report an incident or situation of suspected abuse, it is not required that a reporter have proof that abuse
has occurred. Any uncertainty in deciding to report suspected abuse should be resolved in favor of making a report.

1. Immediately report the information to the Director of Public Safety at 610-796-8350 or greg.delp@alvernia.edu. If for some reason you are unable or prefer not to contact the Director of Public Safety, contact the Vice President for Finance & Administration at 610-796-5600 or doug.smith@alvernia.edu.

2. Do not directly question or solicit information from the child. That is not your role; the role of investigation lies with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and, in certain circumstances, with law enforcement.

3. If you are a university employee and also a registered medical professional, you have a concurrent obligation to directly report injuries caused by suspected child abuse to the local or state police.

4. Immediately after you have finished making the foregoing reports, report the information to your immediate supervisor. An initial oral report to your supervisor is acceptable, but written detail should be supplied upon request and may be supplied in every instance.

5. Athletics staff must also report the information to the Director of Athletics.

Public Safety Director Responsibilities

Upon receiving a report made under this Policy, the Director of Public Safety shall assume the responsibility and have the legal obligation to report the suspected child abuse to the Department of Public Welfare. Reports must be made orally, and immediately, the Department of Public Welfare’s ChildLine at 800-932-0313.

ChildLine will ask for the following information:

- The child’s name, age, and home address
- The name of the child’s primary caregiver
- The concerns that prompted making the call

The Director of Public Safety shall notify the reporting employee that the report was made after making the initial oral report to ChildLine.

Within 48 hours of reporting to ChildLine, the Director of Public Safety must make a written report on forms provided by the Department of Public Welfare (Report of Suspected Child Abuse [CY-47]) to the county children and youth agency in the county where the suspected child abuse occurred. The Director of Public Safety shall maintain records of all reports made under this Policy.

Permissible Reporting

Even if you are not someone with a mandatory reporting obligation under the Law, you are still permitted to report known or suspected child abuse as a private citizen to the Department of Public Welfare (800-932-0313) in circumstances not related to your employment at Alvernia such as, for example, your connection with a children’s local community organization.

Prohibition on Retaliation

Any person who makes a good faith report of child abuse may not be subjected to retaliation in employment.

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1 Or, in circumstances where the Director for some reason is not/cannot be involved, the Vice President for Finance & Administration.