

Frequently Asked Questions:

(continued)

Q. To whom is this report to be made?

A. *The required report is made to the Florida Department of Children and Families through the Florida Abuse Hotline: 800-962-2873.*

Q. What if I am unsure if I have seen evidence of child abuse or neglect.

A. *If you suspect that you are seeing evidence of child abuse or neglect you should talk with your supervisor immediately and you or your supervisor should immediately contact the Office of the General Counsel for further guidance, or call the Edison State College Public Safety office at 239-489-9203.*

Edison State College has a zero tolerance policy for the failure on the part of any College employee to timely report child abuse, abandonment or neglect committed on College property or at College events or functions to the appropriate authorities.

We all need to be committed to protecting vulnerable persons within our environment and at our activities and functions here at Edison State College.



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Protecting Children is Everyone's Job

Protecting Children is Everyone's Job

In 2012, House Bill 1355 by Representative Chris Dorworth and its companion bill, Senate Bill 1816 by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto were filed during the state legislative session following the child sexual abuse scandal that rocked Pennsylvania State University. At that university, officials and administrators were made aware of serious and on-going sexual abuse of children perpetrated by one of the assistant coaches, spanning years. Administrators failed to report the suspected child abuse to the authorities, thus allowing it to continue against many victims.

As a result, Florida leaders were determined that should such terrible acts occur in one of Florida's institutions of higher education -- public or private -- there would be mandatory reporting of the abuse or suspected abuse. There would also be significant penalties for the institution if a failure to report was proven. The law now mandates a \$1,000,000 fine for each failure to report, applying to both institutional administrators and the institution's law enforcement agency, if applicable.

Governor Rick Scott signed this bill into law following passage by the Florida Legislature.

What Does This Law Mean to You?

Ultimately, this law was designed to give us the tools necessary to help protect children from abuse and/or neglect. As citizens of the communities we serve, we need to be looking out for children and reporting any suspected abuse or neglect. At Edison State College we have daily contact with children who are dually enrolled as students in college courses, are participating in college activities, and who are otherwise present on our campuses at college activities. This new law requires that we all have a heightened awareness for the welfare of these children.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. I have heard that there is a new Florida law which would permit a million dollar fine to be imposed on a Florida college if it fails to report child abuse. Is there such a law?

A. Yes. Effective October 1, 2012, Florida law will now include a provision that requires college administrators to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect committed on College property or at College events or functions.

Q. What is child abuse, abandonment, or neglect?

A. "Abuse" means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. This includes both affirmative acts and omissions to act.

"Abandoned" or "abandonment" means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, makes no provision for the child's support and has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child.

"Neglect" occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

Q. What is the legal definition of a "child"?

A. A child is a person under the age of 18 years of age who has not been emancipated by court order.

Q. For Florida colleges, does the new law just impose a reporting requirement on college administrators?

A. No. The college's law enforcement agency must now also report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect committed on the college's property or during an event or function sponsored by the college.