HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Before you contact social services or law enforcement, obtain as much of the following information as possible:

• The child’s name, age, and address.
• The names and addresses of the child’s parents, guardians, or other caretakers.

• The name and, if possible, the address of the suspected abuser.
• Any information about whether other children are present in the home, or in the place where the child may have been abused.
• If possible, any information about the presence of weapons, or about the abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

Although it is good to have as much information as possible, don’t fail to report suspected abuse because you may not have all of this information.

These agencies investigate suspected child abuse and protect abused children, but they cannot do it unless they receive reports from people like you.

PITT COUNTY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES
252-902-1110
1717 West Fifth Street, Greenville, NC 27834

PITT COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE
252-830-4141
100 West Third Street, Greenville, NC 27834

GREENVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
252-329-4315
500 South Greene Street, Greenville, NC 27834

WINTERVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
252-756-1105
2593 Railroad Street, Winterville, NC 28590

It is not your job to investigate allegations of abuse, but it is your job to report any reasonable suspicions to the authorities.
HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

We all want to live in a community where child abuse is prevented and – when it occurs – is effectively addressed.

All children and adolescents have a *legal right* to be free from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. In North Carolina, every adult has a *legal responsibility* to report suspected child abuse to social services or law enforcement, regardless of the adult’s relationship with the child.

There is no legal liability for making a report in good faith, and your identity must be kept confidential by social services and law enforcement.

WHAT TO NOTICE:

Most sexually abused children have no physical signs. But we should be aware of children with the following characteristics, especially in combination or over long periods of time:

- **Frequent injuries or illnesses**, especially if they go untreated; frequent urinary tract infections; or discomfort in genital or anal areas.

- **Excessive anxiety, fearfulness, watchfulness, passivity, or withdrawal**. The child may also seem emotionally detached from a parent or other caregiver, or may have a strong, unexplained aversion to a particular adult.

- **Sudden changes in behavior**, such as a decline in schoolwork, increase in aggression, depressed mood, difficulty sleeping, or change in appetite.

- **Inappropriate language or behavior** that suggests exposure to pornography, adult sexual behavior, or adult sexual conversation.

- **Questions or comments that the child may use to see whether you can be trusted**. For example, these may include a question about whether you are willing to keep a secret. Children may also tell stories about abuse that happened to someone else, or that the child claims to have seen in a movie, on television, or in a dream.

DO’S AND DON’TS ABOUT RESPONDING:

- **DO** pay careful attention to specific signs of possible abuse, and to the specific dates, times, and places where you see or hear them. Write them down.

- **DO** be attentive, calm, and reassuring if the child wishes to talk with you. Sit with the child so that your eyes are on the same level.

- **DO** praise the child for having the courage to talk with you. Reassure the child that you believe him, and that he is not to blame for what he has experienced. Gently assure the child that he may tell you as much as he wishes.

- **DO** write down everything the child tells you in as much detail as you can. If possible, do this immediately after talking with the child. Use the words that the child used.

- **DO** obtain specific information you will need to make a report (please refer to the other side of this sheet).

- **DON’T** react with shock, horror, anger, or other types of visible stress. This may cause the child to feel guilt or shame.

- **DON’T** be critical or judgmental of either the child or the possible abuser.

- **DON’T** ask the child leading questions about his experience, or pressure the child to describe it more fully. Only a trained interviewer should try to elicit detailed information.

- **DON’T** promise the child that you will not tell anyone, or make other promises you may not be able to keep.

- **DON’T** hesitate to contact social services or law enforcement (please refer to the other side of this sheet). Many children who finally tell someone about sexual abuse need to know they are protected.

- **DON’T** confront the suspected abuser, or do anything else that might be dangerous for you or the child.