



**Justice Center for the  
Protection of People  
with Special Needs**

# **Mandated Reporting**

**An Overview of Reporting Requirements for  
Human Service Professionals**

**161 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, NY 12054  
[www.justicecenter.ny.gov](http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov)**

# Protection of People with Special Needs Act

The Justice Center was established by the “Protection of People with Special Needs Act”, enacted as Chapter 501 of the Laws of 2012. The intent of the act was to create a durable set of consistent safeguards for all vulnerable persons that will protect them against abuse, neglect and other conduct that may jeopardize their health, safety and welfare, and to provide fair treatment to the employees upon whom they depend.

In addition to establishing the Justice Center, the Protection of People with Special Needs Act mandates that the Justice Center operate a statewide hotline, referred to as the Vulnerable Persons’ Central Register or the VPCR, to ensure that reportable incidents are promptly reported and fully investigated, that responsible individuals are held accountable and that providers implement corrective action plans to prevent future incidents.

Further, the Protection of People with Special Needs Act identifies certain people who are defined as mandated reporters and requires these people to report reportable incidents involving vulnerable persons to the Justice Center’s Vulnerable Person’s Central Register.

## Who is a Mandated Reporter?

Mandated reporters are required to report reportable incidents involving vulnerable persons. Human Services Professionals, as defined below, are Mandated Reporters.

**Human Services Professionals** | Human services professionals are those who may not see a service recipient on a daily basis, but who interact with the individual during the course of providing professional services. They are required to report when, while acting in their official or professional capacity, they are presented with information which gives them reasonable cause to suspect a reportable incident has occurred.

*\*Social Services Law, §488(5)(a)*

### Medical/ Clinical Professionals

Physician	Medical Examiner	Emergency Medical Technician
Resident	Coroner	Person Credentialed by OASAS
Intern	Dentist	Hospital Personnel Engaged in the Admission, Examination, Care or Treatment
Reg. Physician Asst.	Dental Hygienist	Licensed Creative Arts Therapist
Surgeon	Registered Nurse	Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Podiatrist	Licensed Practical Nurse	Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Chiropractor	Nurse Practitioner	Licensed Behavior Analyst & Certified Behavior Analyst Assistant
Osteopath	Mental Health Prof.	Licensed Speech/Language Pathologist or Audiologist
Optometrist	Licensed Psychoanalyst	Licensed Physical Therapist
Social Worker	Christian Science Prof.	Licensed Occupational Therapist

### Education Professionals

School Social Worker	School Teacher
School Nurse	School Guidance Counselor
Social Services Worker	School Psychologist
School Administrator	

- Other School Personnel required to hold a teaching or administrative license or certificate
- Full or part-time compensated school employee required to hold a temporary coaching license or prof. coaching certificate
- Any other Child Care or Foster Care Worker

### Law Enforcement Personnel

Peace Officer  
 Police Officer  
 District Attorney or Assistant District Attorney  
 Investigator employed in the office of a District Attorney  
 Any other Law Enforcement Official

## Who is a Vulnerable Person?

Individuals who may be vulnerable to abuse and neglect because of their reliance on professional caregivers in state operated, licensed or certified facilities, programs or agencies.

Vulnerable persons are not necessarily individuals with disabilities, although many are.

## State Oversight Agencies

Certain facilities and provider agencies licensed, operated or certified by the following State Oversight Agencies serve vulnerable persons with whom you may come into contact.

### Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

*Some examples include but are not limited to:*

Community Residences (CR)  
Individualized Residential Alternatives (IRA)  
Certified Day Habilitation Programs  
Article 16 Clinics

### Office of Mental Health (OMH)

*Some examples include but are not limited to:*

Licensed Mental Health Clinics  
Community Residences  
Residential Treatment Facilities for Children & Youth  
Inpatient Psychiatric Units at a general hospital

### Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)

*Some examples include but are not limited to:*

Youth Detention Centers  
Residential Treatment Centers (RTC)  
Homeless Youth and Runaway Programs  
Family Type Homes for Adults

### Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS)

*Some examples include but are not limited to:*

Addiction Treatment Centers  
Intensive Residential Rehabilitation Programs  
Outpatient Services  
Hospital-based Inpatient Detox Programs

### Department of Health (DOH)

*Some examples include but are not limited to:*

Adult Homes or Enriched Housing Programs that have a licensed capacity of 80 or more beds, in which at least 25% of the residents are persons with a serious mental illness.  
Summer Day Camps  
Overnight Camps  
Traveling Summer Day Camps

\* Nursing Homes and Hospitals are NOT covered

### State Education Department (SED)

*The Justice Center has jurisdiction over residential schools that provide education to students with disabilities. Some examples include but are not limited to:*

NYS School for the Blind  
NYS School for the Deaf  
State Supported (4201) Schools  
Approved Residential Schools (In-State and Out-of-State)

\* Public schools are NOT covered

## What is a Reportable Incident?

The Protection of People with Special Needs Act defines three types of incidents that must be reported: abuse, neglect and significant incidents. You are not required to know what type of incident has occurred in order to make a report.

### **Abuse**

Abuse is an action by a custodian against a service recipient, that causes or has the potential to cause injury or serious protracted impairment of the physical, mental or emotional condition of a service recipient.

There are **seven categories of abuse**:

physical abuse; sexual abuse; psychological abuse; deliberate inappropriate use of restraints; use of aversive conditioning; obstruction of reports of reportable incidents; and unlawful use or administration of a controlled substance.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is any action, inaction or lack of attention that breaches a custodian's duty and that results in, or is likely to result in, death, physical injury or serious or protracted impairment of the physical, mental or emotional condition of a service recipient.

Most commonly neglect is the result of a custodian's lack of attention or failure to act as required by his or her responsibilities. **Neglect can include, but is not limited to:** failure to provide proper supervision; failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical, dental, optometric or surgical care; and failure to provide access to educational instruction.

### **Significant Incident**

Any incident, other than an incident of abuse or neglect, that because of its severity or the sensitivity of the situation, may result in, or has the reasonably foreseeable potential to result in, harm to the health, safety or welfare of a person receiving services.

**Types of significant incidents identified in statute:**

1. Conduct on the part of a custodian that is inconsistent with an individual's treatment plan, educational program or generally accepted treatment practices.
2. Conduct between persons receiving services resulting in harm or the potential for harm.
3. ANY other conduct identified in regulations of the State Oversight Agencies.

## How to Report

Mandated reporters can call the toll-free VPCR 24-hour hotline at 1-855-373-2122. For individuals using New York Relay Service, dial 7-1-1 and give the operator the phone number 1-855-373-2122. There is also a web form, as well as a mobile application, that are available for reporting abuse and neglect. For more information, visit the Justice Center's website at [www.justicecenter.ny.gov](http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov).

### **Information You Will Be Asked to Provide**

- Confirmation that immediate protections are in place for the victim; was 9-1-1 called, if necessary
- Details regarding the victim, subjects and witnesses
- Details of the incident, including the date, time, location, description of incident
- Responsible State Oversight Agency
- Name and address of the provider agency, facility and/or program
- Name, title and contact information of others who may have the same information as you
- Any other information that may assist with the investigation or review of the incident
- *You are not required to know all of the answers to these questions to make a report*

**TOLL-FREE VPCR 24-HOUR HOTLINE**  
**1-855-373-2122**

## When is Reporting Required?

If you are a mandated reporter and have reasonable cause to suspect that a reportable incident has occurred and that it was committed by a direct support staff, you must report it to the VPCR immediately upon discovery. The service recipient does not have to suffer harm for an incident to be reportable. The *potential* for harm must also be reported.

### ***Immediately***

Immediately means right away. Immediate reporting may be delayed to take the necessary steps to call 9-1-1, implement safety measures to protect the service recipient from further harm, or to follow internal facility procedures.

However, no internal procedure should significantly delay a report to the Justice Center. Staff going “off-duty” does not justify a delay in reporting. A report that is delayed more than 24 hours may be considered obstruction.

### ***Upon Discovery***

Discovery occurs when a mandated reporter witnesses a suspected reportable incident. It can also mean another person, including a service recipient or family member, provides the mandated reporter with reasonable cause to suspect that a service recipient has been subjected to a reportable incident.

### ***Reasonable Cause***

When trying to determine if you have reasonable cause to suspect an incident has occurred, review the circumstances, evidence and facts known or readily available to you.

Consider your own observations, trainings, experiences and common sense in assessing:

- Was the service recipient injured or was there potential for injury?
- Do you believe the explanation of how the injury occurred?
- How reliable is your information?

If you are unsure whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that a service recipient was subjected to a reportable incident, we encourage you to report the incident to the Justice Center. Each mandated reporter has a personal obligation to report a suspected reportable incident individually to the Justice Center.

## Confidentiality of Reporting

As a mandated reporter, your identity is confidential and may not be publicly disclosed. You may ask that your identity not be disclosed but it may be necessary to disclose your identity to the person investigating the reported incident, in order to ensure that an incident is thoroughly investigated. The Justice Center makes every reasonable effort to protect the identity of mandated reporters, especially when a reporter is alleging that he or she is the victim of retaliation for making a report.

## Immunity from Liability

The law grants immunity to mandated reporters from a legal claim which may arise from a good faith act of providing information to the VPCR. For example, if you make a report to the VPCR because you had reasonable cause to suspect a reportable incident has occurred, the subject of the report may not sue you if the allegation is not substantiated. Immunity will not be granted to someone found making an intentionally, false report.

## Is it Reportable?

### State Central Register Example

A 14-year old boy lives at an Office of Mental Health residential treatment facility and spends the weekends at home with this family. He has a scheduled therapy session in your office and you discover a cigarette burn on his neck that was not there the previous week.

### Is this reportable to the Justice Center or the State Central Register of Child Abuse?

In this case, the cigarette burn could have been caused by a custodian at the residential treatment facility or by someone in his family.

If you are unsure where to report, we encourage you to make a report to the Justice Center — we work with the State Central Register to ensure that incidents of abuse and neglect are properly reported and investigated.

### Service Recipient Reports Example

A 16-year old girl who lives in an Office of Children and Family Services residential treatment center visits your office for a dental procedure and you observe bruises on the service recipient's neck. She tells you that yesterday, a staff member placed his hands on her neck and squeezed it.

### Is this reportable to the Justice Center?

**YES.** You have reasonable cause to suspect that a reportable incident occurred because the service recipient reported to you that a staff members placed his hands on her neck and you observe bruises there.

### Custodian Not Identified Example

A 60-year old man who resides in an Office For People With Developmental Disabilities community residence is admitted to the hospital. During your examination, you determine that he is severely malnourished, dehydrated and has bedsores. The service recipient cannot, or will not, discuss his current condition.

### Is this reportable to the Justice Center?

**YES.** You should consider your own observations, training, experience and common sense in assessing the reliability of information presented to you.

Although the service recipient is not discussing his condition, he has suffered multiple injuries. Remember, conclusive evidence that the injuries were caused by a custodian is not required. Identifying the custodian is also not a requirement when making a call to the VPCR.

## What Happens to a Report

### Intake

A trained staff person takes a full report and carefully enters all details of the incident into the VPCR. All calls are recorded and an incident number is assigned at the end of each call. The incident number gives proof that the incident was reported. This number should also be referenced by the reporter if he or she needs to add more information at a later time.

### Classification

After the call, a reportable incident is classified as abuse, neglect or significant incident.

### Assignment

Once the report is classified, a case is created and assigned to the appropriate entity for investigation. Once assigned, the investigation begins.

### Final Determination

Regardless of who is conducting the investigation, the Justice Center reviews *all* abuse and neglect investigations and makes the final determination about whether or not the allegation is substantiated or unsubstantiated.

Once a determination is made, the Justice Center notifies the victim and his or her personal representative, the subject in the case and the provider agency director, of the outcome. Mandated reporters and witnesses are *not notified* of the outcome of the investigation.

The Justice Center does not make a determination regarding significant incidents, however, a State Oversight Agency may request that a provider agency develop a corrective action plan if there is an issue of concern.

## Failure to Report

A mandated reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report suspected abuse or neglect to the VPCR, may be subject to termination and may be sued in civil court for monetary damages for any harm caused by the failure to make a report.

In addition, any human services professional required by law to report a case of suspected abuse or neglect who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, may be prosecuted for a Class A misdemeanor.

## Multiple Reporting Exception

Each mandated reporter has a personal obligation to report a suspected reportable incident individually to the Justice Center unless multiple reports regarding the same incident would be made to the VPCR and the “Multiple Reporting Exception” is met.

Under the “Multiple Reporting Exception”, the only time you are not required to personally report an allegation to the VPCR is if:

- You know that the incident was already reported to the VPCR; AND
- You know that you were named in the report as a person of knowledge of the incident

If you are unsure whether you have reasonable cause to suspect a reportable incident or you are not certain the “Multiple Reporting Exception” has been met, we encourage you to report the incident to the VPCR.

## Resources and Contact Information

Report Abuse or Neglect: 1-855-373-2122

Report Abuse or Neglect TTY: 1-855-373-2123

For additional resources and information on the Justice Center, please visit our website at:

[www.justicecenter.ny.gov](http://www.justicecenter.ny.gov)