

Child Abuse Reporting - Neglect

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... When thinking about your reporting duties regarding child abuse, don't forget about neglect. While many child abuse reports are made for physical abuse (e.g. physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means), sexual abuse or assault, and emotional abuse or child endangerment, the need to make a report involving neglect may be overlooked by the unwary therapist or counselor. Be careful. Most state child abuse reporting laws require that knowledge or reasonable suspicion of neglect of a child be reported. Each state's definition may vary in fine nuance, so be careful.

In general, "neglect" means the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term usually includes both acts and omissions of the responsible person. In California, both "severe neglect" and "general neglect" must be reported. "General neglect" means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred. How is the term "neglect" or similar terms defined by your state's law? How broad is the definition? Is a report mandated or permissive?