

CareCertify LLC

Foster Care Training Series

FC-08

Mandated Reporting & Child Safety

Participant Guide

Foster Care Training Series · Audience: Foster Parents · Agency Staff · Treatment Foster Care Providers · CE Hours: 1.0

You Are a Mandated Reporter

Minnesota's child maltreatment reporting law, Chapter 260E, requires certain people — including foster parents and child-care staff — to report suspected abuse or neglect of any child. As someone who cares for vulnerable children, you are a mandated reporter, and the duty is personal.

This guide covers what counts as maltreatment, the warning signs, how to report, and what happens next. The standard is 'reason to believe' — you don't need proof — because the cost of staying silent is a child left in harm.

Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Explain who is a mandated reporter and who is protected
- Recognize categories and signs of child maltreatment
- Report suspected maltreatment correctly under Chapter 260E
- Describe what happens after a report and reporter protections
- Understand allegations against foster parents

Section 1: Who Must Report and the Standard

Minnesota's Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Chapter 260E) names mandated reporters, including foster parents, child-care providers, and many professionals who work with children. You have a legal duty to report suspected maltreatment of any child — not only children in your care. The duty is personal: if you have reason to believe maltreatment occurred, you must report, even if you assume someone else will. The standard is 'reason to believe,' not proof.

Section 2: Categories of Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment under Chapter 260E includes physical abuse (non-accidental injury or harmful discipline), sexual abuse (any sexual contact or exploitation of a child), emotional or mental injury, and neglect (failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, medical or mental health care, or safety). Prenatal exposure to certain substances and threatened injury are also addressed. When unsure which category applies, report anyway.

Section 3: Recognizing Warning Signs

Warning signs include physical signs (unexplained injuries, injuries that don't match the explanation, poor hygiene, untreated medical needs), behavioral signs (fear, withdrawal, regression, age-inappropriate sexual behavior, sudden changes), and direct disclosures. Take disclosures seriously and respond calmly and supportively. You don't need proof — a sign, a pattern, or a disclosure is reason to report. Children in care, having been harmed before, deserve especially attentive eyes.

Respond well to a disclosure

Stay calm, listen, don't interrogate or react with alarm, and never promise to keep it secret. Then report. How you respond affects the child's safety and the investigation.

Section 4: How and Where to Report

Report suspected child maltreatment to the county child protection agency or local law enforcement, as required under Chapter 260E. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 first. Report promptly, give the facts you have, and notify your caseworker or agency. Internal reporting to your agency does not replace your legal duty to report to the proper authority. Make the report yourself rather than assuming someone else will.

Section 5: What Happens After a Report

After you report, county child protection or law enforcement investigates — that's their role, not yours. Keep the child safe, continue providing care, and cooperate with the investigation. Document the facts objectively, and avoid interrogating or asking leading questions of a child, which can interfere with an investigation. Your report starts a process designed to protect the child.

Section 6: Reporter Protections and Retaliation

Chapter 260E protects good-faith reporters from civil and criminal liability and prohibits retaliation. A mandated reporter who knows of maltreatment and fails to report can face consequences. These protections exist so you never have to choose between your standing and a child's safety — when in doubt, report.

Section 7: Allegations Against Foster Parents

Sometimes allegations of maltreatment are made against foster parents — by a child, family member, or others. These are investigated to protect children, which is appropriate even when an allegation is unfounded. If this happens, cooperate fully; you have rights in the process and can seek support from your agency or a foster-parent association. Maintaining good documentation, boundaries, and safe practices is your best protection, and the system's caution reflects its commitment to child safety.

Section 8: Child Safety Is the Goal

Mandated reporting is one essential part of a bigger commitment: keeping children safe. It works alongside prevention, supervision, safe homes, and good care. As a foster parent or staff member, you are a protector of children — in your home and beyond. If you ever have reason to believe a child is being harmed, report. That single act can change a child's life.

When in doubt, report

If you have reason to believe a child is being maltreated, report to county child protection or law enforcement. You're protected, and a child is depending on you.

Key Terms

Term	What it means
Chapter 260E	Minnesota's law on reporting the maltreatment of minors.
Mandated reporter	A person legally required to report suspected child maltreatment.
Reason to believe	The reporting standard — suspicion, not proof.
Neglect	Failure to provide a child's needs — food, supervision, care, safety.
Disclosure	A child telling you about possible harm — take it seriously and report.
Reporter protection	Legal shield for those who report in good faith.

Check Your Understanding

1. Who must report under Chapter 260E, and what is the standard?
2. Name the categories of child maltreatment.
3. How should you respond when a child discloses abuse?
4. Where do you report child maltreatment?
5. What protections exist for good-faith reporters?

What's Next

Looking ahead

Next, FC-09: Health, Medication & Daily Care covers supporting children's health and daily needs.