How to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

All clergy and many of our staff and volunteers are required by Missouri Law to report suspicions of abuse or neglect to the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline. Also, all clergy, employees and volunteers, whether or not they are mandated reporters, have an ethical obligation to report suspicions of abuse or neglect both to the Children’s Division Child Abuse Hotline and their local law enforcement agency. We all have a moral obligation to protect children.

What is abuse?

Abuse is defined by Missouri law as “any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means..., except that discipline including spanking, administered in a reasonable manner, shall not be construed to be abuse.” The Diocese also considers possession, manufacture or distribution of child pornography, child obscenity and child erotica to be sexual abuse.

What is neglect?

Neglect is defined by Missouri law as “the failure to provide, by those responsible for the care, custody, and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, nutrition or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the child’s well-being.”

Steps when you suspect abuse and/or neglect

Within 24 hours:

1. You must call the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.392.3738; and
2. Report any suspected sexual abuse to your local law enforcement agency or 911; report other abuse or neglect to law enforcement if the child is in danger,
3. Report suspected sexual abuse of a minor to the Diocesan Ombudsman, Jenifer Valenti, at 816.812.2500 or JeniferValenti@att.net, if clergy, employees or volunteers of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph are suspected of abuse.