



# Child Care, an Essential Link

Quality child care depends on a strong partnership between the child care provider and the parents. This partnership enables the provider to be more responsive to each child's needs, and it puts the child care provider in a unique position to support families when they may be under stress. Child care providers play a vital role in supporting the quality of parental care and in preventing child maltreatment.

COVID-19 and joblessness have put a strain on Ohio families. When households are under stress, it's often children who suffer most. However, it has become more difficult to identify cases of child abuse and neglect because Ohio's mandated reporters have had little contact with the children they used to see often. Since March, such reports have declined as much as 50%.

This tip-sheet provides information and reminders on how child care professionals can build and support strong families and prevent child maltreatment.

## What is a mandated reporter?

Child care staff are required by Ohio law to report instances of child abuse and neglect if they see or suspect it is happening. The following professionals are considered mandated reporters in Ohio:

- Agents of county humane societies
- Attorneys
- Audiologists
- County board of developmental disabilities
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Child care program staff
- Children services personnel
- Coroners
- Day camp staff
- Dentists
- Foster caregivers
- Guardians Ad Litem (GAL)
- Marriage and family therapists
- Health care professionals (including nurses, physicians, hospital interns and residents)
- Peace officers, including police, sheriff's deputies and highway patrol officers
- Podiatrists
- Psychiatrists
- School authorities, employees and teachers
- Social workers
- Speech pathologists

For a full list, please visit [codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421](https://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.421).

## Providers can **support families in crisis** by:

- Serve as a sounding board for parents.
- Make suggestions for positive parenting.
- Offer encouragement.
- Recognizing the signs of high-risk behaviors (such as substance abuse, domestic violence) and observing and verifying potentially dangerous situations (such as guns in the house, violent outbursts).
- Identifying potential stressors, such as a loss of a job or unexpected expenses, violence in the neighborhood, or sudden natural disasters.
- Having partnerships with local agencies and nonprofit and faith-based organizations that provide crisis intervention services, such as housing assistance, domestic violence shelters, food banks and health clinics.
- Ensuring that agencies provide culturally appropriate services.
- Establishing protocols and training for how to respond to different kinds of emergencies.
- Using a strengths-based approach as you help the family figure out what they want and how they might achieve it.
- Maintaining your professional boundaries and supporting the family within the protocols and practices defined by your agency.
- Having information and resources available to assist staff and families after a crisis.
- It may be useful for family members or staff to speak with a mental health consultant.