Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Mandated Reporting

The following is taken from the Counseling Handbook for the IMSA Clinical Counselors

All faculty and staff at IMSA are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. Any individual may call the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline on their own without contacting the IMSA counselors. Anyone making a call has their confidentiality protected by law. It is now part of Illinois State law that the Principal of a school is notified if one of their students has been reported to the hotline. This has been done so that the school may follow-up with the student in a confidential counseling setting. In making an anonymous report to the hotline, it is not a violation of the student’s confidentiality to share this information with the IMSA counselors as part of our internal process. Because we function as a community and students interact with a variety of adults on campus, communication of events that may affect the student’s academic, social, emotional and physical wellbeing are paramount. The following has been the usual, although unofficial, process that occurs at IMSA:

- A member of the IMSA community (Faculty, Staff, or Student) suspects that a student is being abused or neglected.
- That person shares this information with the IMSA Clinical Counselor.
- The Clinical Counselor can help the person make the call to the hotline or the counselor can make the call themselves.
- Any mandated reporter must send written confirmation to the appropriate DCFS field office within 48 hours. The DCFS hotline will provide a form to use for this purpose or direct you where to find one on their website.
- If you suspect a child’s death may have been caused by abuse or neglect, you must also call your county’s coroner or medical examiner.
- A courtesy call to the parents informing them that a report has been made is not necessary and is contraindicated by DCFS. It may interfere with their investigation.
This information is shared with the Director of Student Leadership and Development.

DCFS initiates an investigation and will usually interview the student within 24 hours. They may contact the counselor to use an office on campus and often invite the counselor to sit in on the evaluation. This is up to the DCFS investigator.

Every effort is made to insure the student’s confidentiality and privacy. However, the Clinical Counselor and Director may decide to notify the student’s RC, HC, or Director of Residential Life in order for the student to receive more support while they are going through the process.

DCFS will make a final determination and notify the person who made the call whether the report was founded (abuse has occurred) or unfounded (abuse has most likely not occurred).

A letter is sent to the Principal at IMSA notifying them of the report, indicating whether the abuse is founded or unfounded, and will name the suspected perpetrator.

Consultation occurs between the Clinical Counselor, Directors of Student Leadership and Residential Life, the Principal and any other necessary parties as to what other steps might be taken. These may include the following:

- Arrange regular counseling sessions with the student and the Clinical Counselor on campus.
- Contact the family to discuss how the incident affects the student while at IMSA and develop any other supports that may be necessary.
- Referrals can be given to the family for off-campus counseling if they request this.
- Contact Security and share any pertinent information to insure the student’s safety while on campus.

When should a report be made to DCFS?

- Reports should be made to the following numbers
  - 1-800-25-ABUSE (Illinois)
  - 1-800-358-5117 (TTY)
  - 217-524-2606 (outside Illinois)

- “You should call the child abuse hotline whenever you believe that a person who is caring for the child, who lives with the child, or who works with or around children has caused injury or harm or put the child at risk of physical injury as defined in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.” ([www.state.il.us/dcfs/FAQ/faq_faq_can.shtml](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/FAQ/faq_faq_can.shtml))

- Some examples may be, but are not limited to
  - If you see someone hitting a child with an object.
  - If you see marks on a child’s body that do not appear to have been caused by accident.
  - If a child tells you that he or she has been harmed by someone
- If a child appears to be undernourished, is dressed inappropriately for the weather, or is young and has been left alone.
- If you suspect any type of physical or sexual abuse.

- You may always contact the hotline with any concerns and they can recommend if a report should be made.

- “People who report alleged child abuse or neglect in good faith cannot be held liable for damages under criminal or civil law. In addition, their names are not given to the person they name as the abuser or to anyone else unless ordered by a hearing officer or judge. Only members of the general public may make reports without giving their names.” (DCFS website)

- “Mandated reporters who make good faith reports have the same immunity from liability under the law as non-mandated reporters. However, a mandated reporter’s failure to report suspected instances of child abuse of neglect to DCFS constitutes a Class A misdemeanor; simply reporting suspicions to a superior does not satisfy legal requirements.” (DCFS website)

- “Any person who knowingly transmits a false report to the Department commits the offense of disorderly conduct under subsection (a) (7) of Section 26-1 of the Criminal Code of 1961.” (DCFS website)

What should be reported?
- The child’s name, address and age (both the IMSA address and their home address and contact phone numbers)
- The nature of the suspected abuse or neglect, including when and where it occurred. Details are important.
- The names of suspected perpetrators and their relationship the child (parent, teacher, neighbor, clergy, etc.)
- Any other information you think may help, including the student’s emotional state at the time the report is being made.