

Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities

The Diocese of Cheyenne requires all adults to comply with reporting responsibilities for any suspected abuse or neglect of minors or vulnerable adults. (*WY Stat § 14-3-205 mandates any person who suspects child/vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation is required to report.*)

Paid personnel should directly report to local law enforcement officials or Department of Family Service agencies. They should also notify their supervisor (such as a pastor or principal) that a report is being made.

A volunteer in any program should discuss any concerns about sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, or neglect of a minor with their immediate supervisor (such as a DRE or teacher), and collaborate together in making a report to local law enforcement officials or to local Department of Family Service agencies.

Immediately upon notification to authorities, the following Diocesan Office must be contacted:

- Chancellor Jean Chrostoski – 307-638-1530 x105

Important information to know as a mandated reporter:

- Reporting must occur immediately once a problem is suspected.
- Failure to report may incur legal penalties.
- Illegal behaviors should be referred to law enforcement officials.
- Concerns about a child's welfare in his or her own home are usually best referred to child protection agencies.
- The State provides immunity for any professional who reports suspected abuse.
- The law does not require absolute proof of abuse. "Good faith" is presumed of any person reporting.

The Wyoming Age of Consent is **17 years old**. In the United States, the age of consent is the minimum age at which an individual is considered legally old enough to consent to participation in sexual activity. Individuals aged 16 or younger in Wyoming are not legally able to consent to sexual activity, and such activity may result in prosecution for statutory rape. Wyoming statutory rape law is violated when a person has consensual sexual intercourse with an individual under age 17.

Wyoming does not have a close-in-age exemption. Close in age exemptions, commonly known as "Romeo and Juliet laws" refer to two individuals both under the age of 17 who willingly engage in intercourse to and can both be prosecuted for statutory rape.

Wyoming laws define sexual contact as any contact of a sexual nature between two people (clothed or unclothed). WY Stat § 6-2-301 (2014)

Exposing minors to pornography or soliciting minors for sexual activity is also illegal. All such behaviors should be reported to law enforcement officials (rather than to Department of Family Service). This may include sexual abuse by one student toward another as well as between adults and minors.



Below is a listing of phone numbers for Department of Family Service agencies listed by community. Complete information for all family service agencies in Wyoming is available at: <http://dfsweb.wyo.gov/>

Afton (Lincoln Cnty)	307-886-9232	Lyman (Lincoln Cnty)	307-787-6080
Buffalo (Johnson Cnty)	307-684-5513	Newcastle (Weston Cnty)	307-746-4657
Casper (Natrona Cnty)	307-473-3900	Pinedale (Sublette Cnty)	307-367-4124
Cheyenne (Laramie Cnty)	307-777-7921	Powell (Park Cnty)	307-754-2245
Cody (Park Cnty)	307-587-6246	Rawlins (Carbon Cnty)	307-328-0612
Douglas (Converse Cnty)	307-358-3138	Riverton (Fremont Cnty)	307-856-6521
Evanston (Unita Cnty)	307-789-2756	Rock Springs (Sweetwater Cnty)	307-362-5630
Gillette (Campbell Cnty)	307-682-7277	Sheridan (Sheridan Cnty)	307-672-2404
Greybull (Big Horn Cnty)	307-765-9453	Sundance (Crook Cnty)	307-283-2014
Jackson (Teton Cnty)	307-733-7757	Thermopolis (Hot Springs Cnty)	307-864-2158
Kemmerer (Lincoln Cnty)	307-877-6670	Torrington (Goshen Cnty)	307-532-2191
Lander (Fremont Cnty)	307-332-4038	Wheatland (Platte Cnty)	307-322-3790
Laramie (Albany Cnty)	307-745-7324	Worland (Washakie Cnty)	307-347-6181
Lusk (Niobrara Cnty)	307-334-2153		

Receiving Disclosures of Sexual Abuse from Children

Do...

1. Practice your response before you are in the real situation.
2. Pay attention to your body language. Give the child a signal that you are hearing what she/he says and that you can help.
3. Let the child describe what happened in his or her own words. Ask open ended questions (e.g., "Tell me about that").
4. Gather only the minimum amount of information necessary to meet the threshold of reasonable suspicion.
5. Maintain a calm demeanor. Avoid showing embarrassment, disgust, anger or shock. Let the child know it was brave to share something about a difficult subject.
6. Believe the child. It is damaging for a child who is telling the truth to not be believed, and false reporting is uncommon. It is the responsibility of investigators to determine if abuse has occurred.
7. Reassure the child. Children may feel ashamed or less loveable because of the abuse. Tell the child "What happened was not your fault and I'm glad you told me".
8. Tell the child you will do everything you can to protect him/her. Be honest with the child about your requirement to respond and about the steps you will take.

Do NOT...

1. Try to determine for yourself if the allegation is valid or invalid. This is the role of law enforcement and Child Protective Services.
2. Try to talk a child out of what she/he is saying. If you are skeptical, do NOT express your doubts to the child. This is a task for investigators to sort through, and you can express your doubts to them.
3. Attempt to find out the details in a group of children. Sexual abuse is not an appropriate subject for classmates to discuss.
4. Suggest to a child that you think she/he may have been abused. This can be damaging and is problematic in cases in which abuse did happen but the information was elicited through the use of leading questions.
5. Gossip about these allegations to friends, colleagues, or other professionals. Follow strict rules about confidentiality and remember that legal processes may be entailed.