

Strategies to Enhance Decision-Making for Mandated Reporters in Education: Implementing Assembly Bill 2085

This document is intended to help your district to better understand and comply with AB 2085, a law that went into effect in January 2023 and narrowed the legal definition of general neglect. This document should be used in conjunction with the AB 2085 training (available at [SupportingFamilies.lacounty.gov](https://supportingfamilies.lacounty.gov)) and in alignment with your district's policies and procedures.

The following are recommended best practices to help Mandated Reporters in your district make accurate and consistent reporting decisions that take AB 2085 into account. Your districts are not required by law to employ any specific strategy. Remember to **apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout**.

When deciding whether a situation requires reporting suspected general neglect to the Child Protection Hotline, Mandated Reporters should consider the following steps in their decision-making process:

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

1 **Clarify** the concern and how AB 2085 may apply.

Under AB 2085, reportable general neglect has changed to include the child's "substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness" AND exclude "a parent's economic disadvantage."

When determining whether a situation mandates a report of suspected general neglect to the Child Protection Hotline, Mandated Reporters should consider the following:

- Is this child's parent/caregiver negligently failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision?
- What information suggests that the potential **substantial risk** of harm?
 - (Meaning, without intervention, the child is likely to experience serious physical harm or a serious illness in the future.)
- In what way could the concerning situation put the child at risk for serious physical **harm** or **serious illness**, specifically?
- How are the parent/caregiver's economic circumstances and needs playing a role?

2 **Consider** your point of view.

- What questions can I ask myself to ensure I am thinking clearly?
- Am I addressing any potential biases?
- How am I separating facts from assumptions?

3 **Consult** whenever reasonably possible.

Ideally, this consultation should be with someone who has been trained on AB 2085, and it's important to ensure that your consultation aligns with the LEA's policies and procedures.

- Would discussing the situation with someone else help me make a more informed reporting decision?
- Would it help me check for any biases?

Use the box below to specify your district/school site's process for consultation.

4 **Complete** the General Neglect Decision Tree.

- [Access the Decision Tree guide.](#)

5 **Decide** next steps.

What to do Next

After completing the **Recommended Decision-Support Steps**, the General Neglect Decision Tree will propose that Mandated Reporters take specific action to connect the family to supports and services that address unmet needs and/or make a report.

Supporting Families in Need

There may be instances when a Mandated Reporter decides that a report to the Child Protection Hotline is not necessary, but the family could benefit from supportive services available in their community. In such cases, the following resources may be helpful:

- Mandated Reporters should contact the designated Community Liaison or resource directory at their district or school site to identify potential community resources. Other sources for this information may include the school or district homeless liaison, parent or community liaison, community schools coordinator, school counselor, nurse, or school social worker.
- Visit the [SupportingFamilies.lacounty.gov](https://www.supportingfamilies.lacounty.gov) website.
- Visit the [LACOE.edu/mandatedsupporting](https://lacoed.edu/mandatedsupporting) website.
- In the toolkit Mandated Reporters will find a Community Based Resources Tool to assist them with identifying service providers.

Providing supportive services to families in need can prevent child abuse and neglect while improving family wellbeing.

Effective and Supportive Reporting

If reporting general neglect to the Child Protection Hotline is necessary, Mandated Reporters can do so while also being compassionate, supportive, and sensitive to the family's circumstances.

When the Mandated Reporter has made the decision to report suspected child abuse or neglect, these tips should be considered:

- Anticipate spending at least 25+ minutes making the report.
- Be prepared with demographic information about the family.
- Reports should be made based on factual information.
- Every detail, no matter how small it may seem, is important.
- Include family strengths, protective factors, and available supports in your verbal and written report.
- Mandated Reporters are required to provide their name and contact information to the Child Protection Hotline when making a report. DCFS will not share their identity as the reporter with the family. However, in certain situations, it may be beneficial for the mandated reporter to include the youth and/or family in the reporting process if they feel comfortable and if doing so does not endanger themselves or the child. For example, some Mandated Reporters choose to make the call to the Child Protection Hotline with the family and explain the process to them.

If you know or reasonably suspect that a child has been a victim of abuse or neglect, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Protection Hotline (800-540-4000) as soon as possible.