



Implementing Assembly Bill (AB) 2085

Guidance For Mandated
Reporters In Los Angeles County



LA COUNTY MANDATED
SUPPORTING INITIATIVE





Note

This training, including all documents associated with it, is intended to help Los Angeles County Mandated Reporters better understand a recent change in California law, specifically Assembly Bill 2085 of 2022, which modified the definition of general neglect.

This training is **not** a comprehensive training on Mandated Reporting and instead is intended to supplement existing organizational Mandated Reporter training.

If you have questions about this training, consult with your organizational leadership.

Objectives of This Training

Inform Los Angeles County Mandated Reporters about Assembly Bill (AB) 2085, the state law enacted in 2023 which modified the definition of general neglect within the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act — and how it aligns with statewide and county efforts to ensure children are safe and strengthen families.

Equip Mandated Reporters with additional skills, guidance, and support to:

1. Comply with AB 2085.
2. Differentiate family needs from child neglect.
3. Make more accurate, consistent, and equitable decisions about reporting suspected general neglect.
4. Implement approaches to supporting families in need when a report to the Child Protection Hotline may not be required by law.

What is AB 2085?

AB 2085

California State **Assembly Bill 2085** (Holden) went into effect on January 1, 2023.

AB 2085

AB 2085 narrowed the legal definition of general neglect.

AB 2085

The legislative intent of AB 2085 is to:

- **Limit overreporting** of families whose needs can be met outside of child protective services agencies, such as the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).
- **Eliminate inaccurate reports** to the Child Protection Hotline by Mandated Reporters for reasons related to poverty, biases (racial, class, and others), fear, and/or feeling unsure about what else to do.
- **Address racial disproportionality** in LA County's child welfare system by reducing overreporting and resulting trauma to families of color, especially Black families, and those experiencing poverty.
- **Decrease strain** on the child welfare system.

General Neglect Before AB 2085 Statutory Definition

[/'stæʃə'tôrē/ / ,def.ɪ'nɪʃ.ən/]

General neglect means (1) “the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where” (2) “no physical injury to the child has occurred.”





General Neglect **After AB 2085** Statutory Definition

[/'stɑːtʃəˌtɔːrē/ / ,def.ɪ'niʃ. ən/]

General neglect means (1) “the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where” (2) “no physical injury to the child has occurred,” (3) **“but the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness.”** (4) **“General neglect does not include a parent’s economic disadvantage.”**

General Neglect **After** AB 2085

Key Takeaway

AB 2085 changes the legal definition of general neglect only. It does not change how other types of maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exploitation, or severe neglect) are legally defined and does not eliminate mandated reporting responsibilities.

include a parent's economic disadvantage.”

Reasonable Suspicion

Mandated Reporters are required by law to report a **reasonable suspicion** of child abuse or neglect.

A suspicion would be considered reasonable if another person with **your education, training, and experience** would come to the same conclusion.

If you know or **reasonably suspect** that a child has been a victim of abuse or neglect, make a report to the LA County Child Protection Hotline as soon as possible.

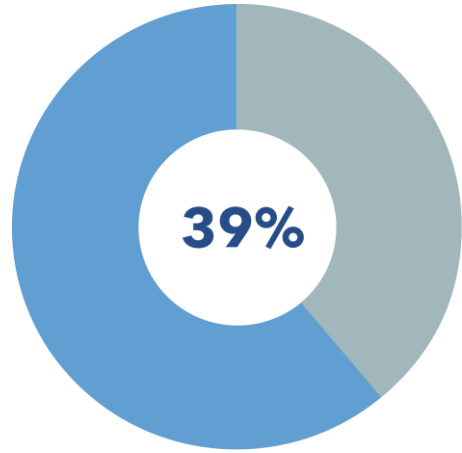


**Why was this change
necessary and how
is AB 2085 part of
the solution?**

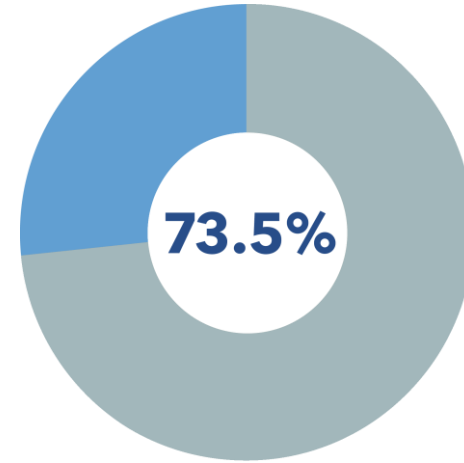
General Neglect is Overreported

Did You Know?

General neglect is **the most common allegation reported** to the LA County Child Protection Hotline. **The vast majority of allegations are not substantiated.** *



of allegations made to the Hotline report **general neglect.**



of general neglect allegations **are not substantiated.**

Families experiencing poverty **are disproportionately of color** and are more likely to be reported and investigated for general neglect allegations. **Most families experiencing poverty do not neglect their children.**

Eliminating inaccurate reports of general neglect is a key goal of AB 2085 and understanding that poverty does not equal neglect is crucial.

*Reports are substantiated in “circumstances where the evidence makes it more likely than not that child abuse or neglect, as defined, occurred” (Cal. Pen. Code § 11165.12(b)).

Inaccurate Reporting Has Consequences

Impact on Families & Communities

Fear, Stress, and Trauma

- Can be terrifying, overwhelming, and compounds toxic stress.
- Continues intergenerational trauma for families of color.

Disrupts Trust

- Parents/caregivers may feel punished for seeking support.
- Youth/families may lose trust in service providers and other systems of care.
- Youth/families may be less likely to seek help that could prevent maltreatment.

Impact on Mandated Reporters

- Reporting for reasons other than a suspicion of abuse/neglect can create moral distress.
- May disrupt trust and connection with families.

Impact on System

- Overburdens entire child protective services system.
- Redirects resources from children who may truly be unsafe and families who require a child protective services intervention.

Oversurveillance

- Disproportionately occurs among families of color and those living in under-resourced communities.
- Reports remain on a family's child welfare record even when no maltreatment is found.

Causes Racial Disproportionalities and Magnifies Disparities in Child Welfare System

- Black children are overrepresented in DCFS and are five times as likely to be placed in foster care compared to White children.

Mandated Reporter Training and Support

Did You Know?

California law does not require a standardized Mandated Reporter training.

Existing Mandated Reporter trainings:

- **May not foster skills to think critically** about suspected abuse and neglect.
- May be **fear-based and coercive**.
 - Strong emphasis on penalties for not reporting.
- May encourage reporting when the family needs supportive services but there may not be a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect.

Many Mandated Reporters make reports to the Child Protection Hotline just to access help for families.

One survey of Mandated Reporters found that **43% of respondents** made reports when they **did not suspect** child abuse and neglect. Of these:

- 23% reported to protect themselves or their organization from legal responsibility.
- 17% reported to connect families to services because no known alternative supportive resources were available.
- 10% weren't sure what else to do.

Bias Contributes to Overreporting General Neglect



- Bias is a personal and sometimes **unreasoned thought or judgment that unfairly discriminates or favors** a person or group of people.
- **All humans have biases.** They are learned from society, influenced by identities and lived experiences, and do not always reflect one's conscious beliefs or values.
- Our biases impact **who** we report and **what** incidents we see as reportable.
 - **Messages, images, and stereotypes** about race and class contribute to overrepresentation in the child welfare system of families who are Black, Brown, Native/Indigenous, and experiencing poverty.
- The way our brains work to process information often means that **we make fast, automatic, and unconscious decisions.** In certain situations, this can lead to biased decision-making.
 - **Environmental and biological stressors also impact decision-making.** For example, we may be more susceptible to bias when faced with a reporting decision at the end of a long day, when stressed/emotionally charged, tired, or hungry.

- Bias is a personal and sometimes **unreasoned thought or judgment that unfairly discriminates or favors** a person or group of people.
- **All humans have biases.** They are learned from

Key Takeaway

Examining our biases and being aware of situations that make us vulnerable to unconscious, automatic thinking can help prevent biased decision-making.

- **Environmental and biological stressors also impact decision-making.** For example, we may be more susceptible to bias when faced with a reporting decision at the end of a long day, when stressed/emotionally charged, tired, or hungry.

Bias
Cont
Over
Gen

Self-Reflection: Beliefs About Poverty



Circumstances stemming from poverty, such as housing instability, food insecurity, and limited access to resources, as well as the negative impacts on caregiver physical and mental health (especially traumatic stress), are often incorrectly viewed as neglect.

What words or phrases come to mind when you think of poverty?

When you think of families who are experiencing poverty, what kinds of images, thoughts, and assumptions come to mind?

Self-Reflection: Beliefs About Poverty

Key Takeaway

Building awareness can help eliminate inaccurate reporting of general neglect.

Build awareness to buffer bias.

Circumstances stemming from poverty, such as housing instability, food insecurity, and limited access to resources, as well as the negative impacts on caregiver physical and mental health (especially traumatic stress), are often incorrectly viewed as neglect.

What words or phrases
come to mind when

y?

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es,

thoughts, and

assumptions come to

mind?



Implementing Assembly Bill (AB) 2085 to Support Families in Need: Strategies to Enhance Mandated Reporters' Decision-Making



Note

The strategies provided in this section are **recommended** best practices to help Mandated Reporters make accurate and consistent reporting decisions that are aligned with the legislative intent of AB 2085. Mandated Reporters are **not** required by law to employ any specific strategy.

If you know or reasonably suspect that a child has been a victim of abuse or neglect, please contact the Child Protection Hotline as soon as possible.

Recap

How Does AB 2085 Impact Reporting?

Under AB 2085, reportable general neglect means (1) “the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision where” (2) “no physical injury to the child has occurred,” (3) **“but the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness.”** (4) **“General neglect does not include a parent’s economic disadvantage.”**

Breaking Down AB 2085

Under AB 2085
Mandated Reporters
must reasonably suspect
that the:

1. Child's parent/caregiver negligently failed to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision.
2. No physical injury to the child has occurred.

AND

(3) Child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or serious illness.

- **Substantial risk** means that without intervention, child is likely to experience serious harm in the future.

Mandated Reporters must also keep in mind that:

(4) Parent's economic disadvantage is not general neglect.

1. Child's parent/caregiver failed to

Key Takeaway

One of the best tools for making more accurate reporting decisions is critical thinking. It is important to apply critical thinking throughout the entire decision-making process while drawing on your training and professional experience.

(4) Parent's economic disadvantage is not general neglect.

Self-Reflection: Critical Thinking



What does it mean to think critically?

What tips would you give someone in your field about using critical thinking skills to make a reporting decision?

Critical Thinking & Reporting

How You Go About
Making Decisions
Matters

Be analytical.

Stay curious.

Keep an open mind.

Question information and
thoughts.

Examine facts versus assumptions.

Think deeply.

Be willing to consider new information and
potentially change your mind/course of action.

Key Takeaway

The decision to report suspected child abuse or neglect (or not) is important and has consequences for everyone involved. It should be made by using a **careful and deliberate approach.**

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.



STEP
01

Clarify the concern
and how AB 2085 may apply.



STEP
02

Consider
your point of view.



STEP
03

Consult
whenever reasonably possible.



STEP
04

Complete
*the General Neglect
Decision Tree.*



STEP
05

Decide
next steps.



Case Example

M is a nine-year-old who has had poor attendance since the school year started. She missed almost two years of school and returned this year.

When you, the Mandated Reporter, recently saw M and her parents/caregivers, you noticed that they both had bad body odor. You also observed that M wears the same dirty sweater for days at a time, and her clothes are frequently covered in dog hair. M often has dirt that is stuck on her arms, neck, and under her nails.

You learn that other students, staff, and teachers have complained about the odor and students avoid being next to M. You believe that M's hygiene contributes to her not wanting to go to school.

In speaking with M's parents/caregivers, you learn that the school nurse spoke to them about M's hygiene. It is unclear to you whether there were any changes after that. When you interact with M, she is timid and does not speak much, giving only one-word answers.

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.



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STEP
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Decision Tree.*



STEP
05

Decide
next steps.





Clarify: What is the Concern?

When presented with a concerning situation, try to get as much information as possible. This information will be important to provide to the Child Protection Hotline if you determine that a report is required.

Use these questions to guide your thinking.

Ask Yourself:	
What specifically am I concerned about?	
What facts do I already have?	
What information is missing and what additional questions would help me better understand the situation?	



The Difference Between Clarifying and Investigating Questions

Investigating

- Visiting the home to look for evidence.
- Conducting a forensic interview with the child.
- Asking for records/receipts to support information shared by parents.
- Calling and interviewing other people connected to the situation.
- Verifying information with sources to find proof.
- Working with multiple agencies to investigate, e.g. law enforcement, district attorney, legal counsel, etc.

Clarifying

- Asking questions of the parents and child to learn more about the situation and understand context.
- Asking open ended questions to let the parents and child talk freely.
- Wanting to understand if there is reasonable suspicion for neglect or if the family is more suited to being linked to services.



Ask Yourself:

Key Takeaway

Clarify to understand. Asking clarifying questions is not the same as investigating. Investigative questions seek to gather evidence and/or proof. Clarifying questions seek to understand. It is not the job of Mandated Reporters to investigate suspected instances of abuse or neglect. However, obtaining additional information can help Mandated Reporters make better decisions about when a report is needed and when a family might just need additional support.

Clarify Concern

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report is

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Clarify: What is the Concern?

Ask Yourself:	
What specifically am I concerned about?	<i>School absences and hygiene</i>
What facts do I already have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Missed 2 school years, has ongoing absences.</i>• <i>Clothing is dirty.</i>• <i>Hygiene/body odor negatively impacts M's relationships at school.</i>• <i>M appears reserved.</i>
What information is missing and what additional questions would help me better understand the situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Why does M miss so much school?</i>• <i>Is M safe when she's not at school?</i>• <i>Are M's parents/caregivers facing any financial issues that could be causing the current situation?</i>• <i>Is there a history of concerns about M?</i>• <i>Would supportive services address the concerns?</i>• <i>What strengths exist within this family and what supports are already in place?</i>

Case Example, continued

You follow up with M's parents/caregivers and M to try to better understand the situation. You ask some of the additional questions you identified and learn the following details:

- M's parents/caregivers lost their jobs two years ago, were evicted, homeless, and just recently found new jobs. This has been a very difficult time for them financially.
- M missed two years of school because they moved around to live with different relatives, never staying in one place for more than a few months. M's parents/caregivers tried to register her for school on several occasions but had to move before M could attend.
- Because M's parents/caregivers can't contribute to the finances of the household, their relatives only allow one shower per week for M. M's parents also do not have enough money to take M's clothes to the laundromat on a consistent basis.
- M shares that she feels safe with her relatives and has fun at their homes, even though she wishes she had her own home. Her parents/caregivers watch her during the day except when they go on job interviews or other errands where M can't go. During those times, M's older relatives watch her.



Clarify: How Would AB 2085 Apply?

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

Use these questions to guide your thinking.

Ask Yourself:	
Is this child's parent/caregiver negligently failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision?	<i>No.</i>
<p>What information suggests that the potential risk of harm could be substantial?</p> <p><i>(Meaning, without intervention, child is likely to experience serious physical harm or a serious illness in the future.)</i></p>	<i>There is no substantial risk of harm because M shares that she feels safe in her living environments with relatives and is supervised by adults.</i>
In what way could the concerning situation put the child at risk for serious physical harm or serious illness , specifically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Body odor and dirty clothes do not put M at risk for physical harm or illness.</i> <i>M is also appropriately supervised by her parents or other adults.</i>
How are the parent/caregiver's economic circumstances and needs playing a role?	<i>They are impacting M's parents/caregivers' ability to ensure that M has good school attendance and personal hygiene.</i>

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.



STEP
01

Clarify the concern
and how AB 2085 may apply.



STEP
02

Consider
your point of view.



STEP
03

Consult
whenever reasonably possible.



STEP
04

Complete
*the General Neglect
Decision Tree.*



STEP
05

Decide
next steps.





Consider: Your Mindset and Wellbeing Can Influence Reporting

Pause

The need to make a reporting decision can create a sense of urgency — and with good cause. As a result, Mandated Reporters often move quickly. However, moving *too* quickly can create room for biases and automatic, unconscious thinking that influences decision-making. For these reasons, in some circumstances, it is ok to pause.

Check in with Yourself

You are human, and learning about a potentially reportable event can be stressful. Take a moment to tend to your personal needs so they don't influence your thinking.

- **Emotions**- How are you feeling? Would taking 30 seconds to breathe or move around help you feel more prepared to make a sound reporting decision?
- **Thoughts**- How are your thoughts? What might be getting in the way of clear thinking? Take one minute to collect your thoughts.



Consider

You

Key Takeaway

While reporting suspected child abuse and neglect in a timely way is important, if there is not imminent risk it's ok to take a few minutes to organize your thoughts before making a reporting decision.

some circumstances, it is ok to pause.

Thoughts How are your thoughts? What might be getting in the way of clear thinking? Take one minute to collect your thoughts.



Consider: Are Biases Playing a Role?

When deciding whether to make a report to the Child Protection Hotline, be mindful of the role that biases can play.

Challenge the possible influence of biases by asking yourself:

*If any of these factors were **different or known**, would my thoughts about making a report to the Child Protection Hotline **change**?*

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic status
- Gender or gender identity
- Cultural values/norms
- Sexual orientation or sexual expression
- Skin color
- Religion
- Primary language
- Age
- Neighborhood
- Presence of a disability
- Your feelings about a family
- Your own experiences with maltreatment

If you answer **yes to any of these:**

1. Acknowledge that you are human, and we all have biases.
2. If reasonably possible, consult with a trusted colleague or your supervisor.
3. Consider how your biases may have influenced your assessment of the situation.
4. Self-correct as necessary.

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

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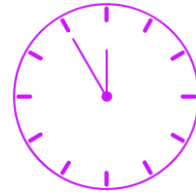
STEP
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Consult: Consultation Improves Decision-Making



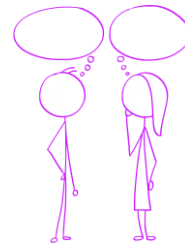
When to Consult?

- When considering making a report to the Child Protection Hotline, particularly if you feel unsure, have questions, or there are “grey areas” to consider.



Why Consult?

- To make sure you’re looking at the situation from all angles.
- Talk through the nuances and “grey areas.”
- To reduce the influence of biases.



Who to Consult?

- A colleague, manager, or your supervisor.
- [Child Protection Hotline](https://www.childprotectionhotline.org/) (800-540-4000).



Key Takeaway

Consult whenever reasonably possible. While the mandate is for the individual, you do not have to make the decision in isolation.

- [Child Protection Hotline](https://www.childprotective.com/child-protection-hotline) (800-540-4000).

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

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STEP
04

Complete
*the General Neglect
Decision Tree.*



STEP
05

Decide
next steps.



Do you know or reasonably suspect that:

STEP
04

Complete
the General Neglect
Decision Tree.



1 the child has been subject to or is in danger of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or severe neglect?

Yes. Stop here. Report to DCFS required.

No. Continue.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

2 the child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical, mental, or behavioral health care are not being met?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

3 if this situation continues without any intervention, is the child likely to suffer serious physical harm or serious illness?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

4 the sole (only) cause of the concern is due to the caregiver's economic disadvantage?

Yes. No report required.

No. Report to DCFS required.

Unknown or unsure. Report may be required. Consult with the DCFS Child Protection Hotline.

For additional questions, concerns or to make a report, contact the DCFS Hotline (800-540-4000).

If you choose to complete this decision tree tool, you may want to consider keeping a copy for your own records.

Case Example

Imagine now that you follow up with M's parents/caregivers and M to try to better understand the situation. You ask the same additional questions as before, but you **learn different details**:

- M's parents/caregivers lost their jobs two years ago, were evicted, homeless, and just recently found new jobs. This has been a very difficult time for them financially.
- M missed two years of school because they moved around to live with different relatives, never staying in one place for more than a few months. M's parents/caregivers tried to register her for school on several occasions but had to move before M could attend.
- Because M's parents/caregivers can't contribute to the finances of the household, their relatives only allow one shower per week for M. M's parents also do not have enough money to take M's clothes to the laundromat on a consistent basis.
- **M shares that she is often left alone when her parents go on job interviews, and sometimes she is left with an older relative. However, M shared that she does not feel safe with this relative because he uses drugs in front of her and often passes out for hours on end. Recently, he passed out with a cigarette in his hand and started a small fire.**
- **M has told her parents about the relative's drug use and that she does not feel safe; however, her parents continue to leave her in his care because they believe the relative has stopped his drug use in the home despite M's reports.**

STEP
01

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Clarify: How Would AB 2085 Apply?

Under AB 2085, the definition of general neglect changed to **include** the child’s “substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness” and **exclude** “a parent’s economic disadvantage.”

Use these questions to guide your thinking.

Ask Yourself:	
Is this child’s parent/caregiver negligently failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision?	Yes.
<p>What information suggests that the potential risk of harm could be substantial?</p> <p><i>(Meaning, without intervention, child is likely to experience serious physical harm or a serious illness in the future.)</i></p>	<p><i>There is substantial risk of harm because M shared that she does not receive proper supervision on a regular basis and does not feel safe when alone with this relative.</i></p>
In what way could the concerning situation put the child at risk for serious physical harm or serious illness , specifically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Body odor and dirty clothes do not put M at risk for physical harm or illness.</i> <i>Lack of appropriate supervision and her relative’s drug use do put her at risk for physical harm, as evidenced by the fire.</i>
How are the parent/caregiver’s economic circumstances and needs playing a role?	<p><i>They are impacting M’s parents/caregivers’ ability to ensure that M has good school attendance and personal hygiene. However, economic disadvantage is not the sole (only) cause for concern about M’s safety.</i></p>

Do you know or reasonably suspect that:

1 the child has been subject to or is in danger of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or severe neglect?

Yes. Stop here. Report to DCFS required.

No. Continue.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

2 the child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical, mental, or behavioral health care are not being met?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

3 if this situation continues without any intervention, is the child likely to suffer serious physical harm or serious illness?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

4 the sole (only) cause of the concern is due to the caregiver's economic disadvantage?

Yes. No report required.

No. Report to DCFS required.

Unknown or unsure. Report may be required. Consult with the DCFS Child Protection Hotline.

For additional questions, concerns or to make a report, contact the DCFS Hotline (800-540-4000).
If you choose to complete this decision tree tool, you may want to consider keeping a copy for your own records.

Recommended Decision-Support Steps

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.



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STEP
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your point of view.



STEP
03

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whenever reasonably possible.



STEP
04

Complete
*the General Neglect
Decision Tree.*



STEP
05

Decide
next steps.





Decide Next Steps

Will you be reporting general neglect to the Child Protection Hotline?

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.

Step 5a:

If no, **connect family to supports, services, and resources.**

Step 5b:

If yes, **proceed with making a report** in a supportive way.

5a AND 5b

It's possible that a situation may be reportable **AND** the family would benefit from being connected to supports and services.



Step 5a: Supporting Families in Need

Note: Providing supportive services to families in need can prevent child abuse and neglect and improve family wellbeing

There will be times when you determine a report to the Child Protection Hotline is not required, but the family would benefit from supportive services that can be provided in their communities.

During these times, the following resources may be helpful:

- Contact your agency's designated **community liaison** or **resource directory** to help identify potential resources.
 - Visit supportingfamilies.lacounty.gov.
 - Find free services at **One Degree**: <https://www.1degree.org>.
 - Call **211** by phone (those with hearing or speech disabilities should call 711 or visit www.211.org).
 - Call **CalHOPE** at 833-317-HOPE or visit www.calhope.org.
 - For Los Angeles residents, identify your local Community Family Resource Centers and/or Prevention & Aftercare Services.
 - Connect to support at **Find Help**: <https://www.findhelp.org>.
 - **Add any additional resources within your community here:**
-



Step 5b: Effective and Supportive Reporting

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

When you have made the decision to report suspected child abuse or neglect, consider these tips:

Have the time to make a report. Anticipate spending at least 25+ minutes on the phone making the initial verbal report.

While it is not your responsibility to investigate, knowing **who, what, where, when, why, and how** will help prepare you for a report.

Be prepared with demographic information for the family (names, ages/DOBs, addresses, and phone numbers).

Reports should be made based on factual information. If you don't know, don't assume.

The more you know, the better DCFS can assess. Every detail, no matter how small it may seem, is important.

Be strength-based. Include family strengths, protective factors, and available supports in your verbal and written report.

You are required to provide your name and contact information to the Child Protection Hotline when making a report and DCFS will not share your identity as the reporter with the family. However, **in certain situations, it may be beneficial for you to include the youth and/or family in the reporting process, if you feel comfortable and if doing so does not endanger you 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.



Small Group Practice Opportunity

Practice Scenario #1

During a large group activity at preschool, four-year-old A. suddenly announced, "I'm hungry and my dad won't give me food," catching his teacher's attention. His remark seemed spontaneous, and Ms. Taylor, his teacher, noticed that A. appeared somewhat distressed. Since A. had only recently joined the preschool, Ms. Taylor was still learning about his behavior and family background. She had seen A.'s father, Mr. Kyle, a few times during drop-off and pick-up, but their interactions had been brief.

Concerned about A.'s comment, Ms. Taylor contacted Mr. Kyle for clarification. Although he initially sounded frustrated, Mr. Kyle eventually explained that the family was struggling financially due to his recent job loss. As a single father, he had been facing many challenges, including their temporary stay in his cousin's garage. Mr. Kyle assured Ms. Taylor that A. eats daily but admitted that, in the rush to make a job interview that morning, he had forgotten to pack breakfast for A.

Do you know or reasonably suspect that:

STEP
04

Complete
the General Neglect
Decision Tree.



1 the child has been subject to or is in danger of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or severe neglect?

Yes. Stop here. Report to DCFS required.

No. Continue.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

2 the child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical, mental, or behavioral health care are not being met?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

3 if this situation continues without any intervention, is the child likely to suffer serious physical harm or serious illness?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

4 the sole (only) cause of the concern is due to the caregiver's economic disadvantage?

Yes. No report required.

No. Report to DCFS required.

Unknown or unsure. Report may be required. Consult with the DCFS Child Protection Hotline.

For additional questions, concerns or to make a report, contact the DCFS Hotline (800-540-4000).

If you choose to complete this decision tree tool, you may want to consider keeping a copy for your own records.

Practice Scenario #2

J., age 2 years and 9 months, did not pass a hearing screening conducted by staff and required follow-up. J.'s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, shared that J. had previously failed a hearing screening at birth, but no one followed through with additional action.

According to his parents, J. is a heavy milk drinker and is a very picky eater; Mrs. Johnson wonders if this is the reason he gets sick often and if it can cause anemia. Staff tried multiple times to collect the physical exam from J.'s parents. After two months, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had yet to submit the physical exam form.

Staff were able to complete the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE screenings within the first 45 days of enrolment; the results indicated that the child was at high risk for developmental delays and a referral to supportive services was prompted. The staff supported Mrs. Johnson by helping her complete and submit a referral to the Regional Center.

The Service Coordinator called the parent and attempted to schedule the intake call and assessments with no success. The Regional Center referral was now at risk of closure.

During this morning's parent conference, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson disclose that they are living at a motel and that J. was found in the parking lot by other residents while Mr. Johnson was at work and Mrs. Johnson showered. The motel supervisor was upset and warned them that they would be evicted if they are not properly supervising their child.

Do you know or reasonably suspect that:

STEP
04

Complete
the General Neglect
Decision Tree.



1 the child has been subject to or is in danger of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or severe neglect?

Yes. Stop here. Report to DCFS required.

No. Continue.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

2 the child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical, mental, or behavioral health care are not being met?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

3 if this situation continues without any intervention, is the child likely to suffer serious physical harm or serious illness?

Yes. Continue.

No. Stop here. No report required; link to supportive services.

Unknown or unsure. Continue.

4 the sole (only) cause of the concern is due to the caregiver's economic disadvantage?

Yes. No report required.

No. Report to DCFS required.

Unknown or unsure. Report may be required. Consult with the DCFS Child Protection Hotline.

For additional questions, concerns or to make a report, contact the DCFS Hotline (800-540-4000).
If you choose to complete this decision tree tool, you may want to consider keeping a copy for your own records.



Step 5b: Effective and Supportive Reporting

Note: If reporting is not being completed...

When you

Have the time to report. Anticipate spending at least 15-20 minutes on the phone for the initial verbal report.

While it is not your responsibility to know **what, when, why,**

help prepare you for a report. **don't assume.**

Remember

Even after you make a report, consider additional supports and services you could suggest to meet the family's other needs.

available supports in your verbal and written report.

choose to make the call to the Child Protection Hotline with the family and explain the process to them.

Summary: Decision-Support Steps

STEP
01 Clarify the concern
and how AB 2085 may apply.



What is the concern?
What facts do I know and what is missing?
What questions can I ask to better understand the situation and what may be needed?
How does AB 2085 apply?

STEP
02 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?

STEP
03 Consult
whenever reasonably possible.



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

STEP
04 Complete
the General Neglect
Decision Tree.



Have I completed the decision tree?
Based on my requirements as mandated reporter, what should I do next?

STEP
05 Decide
next steps.



Step 5a:
Connect the family to supportive resources.
Step 5b:
Proceed with making a report in a supportive way.
5a AND 5b:
The situation is reportable AND the family would benefit from being connected to supports and services.

Apply critical thinking, care, and compassion throughout.



Supporting Families Website

<https://supportingfamilies.lacounty.gov>





Key Takeaways



Wrapping Up: Key Takeaways

Mandated Reporters have the responsibility to **report reasonable suspicion** of abuse and neglect. **The law has changed**, and Mandated Reporters should make a report of general neglect to the Child Protection Hotline if they know or reasonably suspect that:

- The child's parent/caregiver is failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, and no physical injury to the child has occurred, but the child is at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness.

General neglect **does not** include a parent/caregiver's economic disadvantage.

Clarify to understand: Asking clarifying questions is not the same as investigating. Investigative questions seek to gather evidence and/or proof. Clarifying questions seek to understand. Getting additional information can help Mandated Reporters make more accurate reporting decisions.

Wrapping Up: Key Takeaways

Build awareness to buffer bias: All humans have biases. Our beliefs and perceptions are influenced by our own identities and lived experiences. If we are not aware of our biases, it can lead to biased reporting.

Critical thinking is one of the best tools for making sound reporting decisions.

We also make **more accurate decisions** when we use decision-support processes, such as the steps and decision tree described in this training supplement and available as printable tip sheets.

Providing early supportive services to families who are in need can help **prevent child abuse and neglect and help families thrive.**

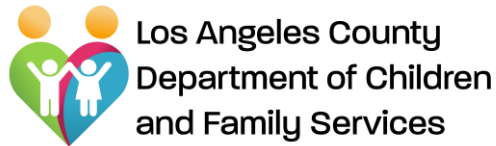
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