

Important Update: New TN Child Abuse Law (Effective May 5, 2025)

Please be aware of a significant change to Tennessee law that expands the definition of child abuse.

What's New?

As of May 5, 2025, a minor **witnessing** certain types of abuse is now considered child abuse. Specifically, the law states:

"(C) A person under eighteen (18) years of age witnesses either abuse of another child in the person's immediate family or household, or domestic abuse, as defined in § 36-3-601, of another member of the person's immediate family or household;"

This means that if a child witnesses such abuse, it falls within the definition of child abuse and is therefore subject to mandatory reporting.

- **"domestic abuse" as defined in § 36-3-601**, which includes:
 - Inflicting, or attempting to inflict, physical injury on an adult or minor by other than accidental means.
 - Placing an adult or minor in fear of, or in, physical harm or physical restraint.
 - Causing malicious damage to the personal property of the abused party.
 - Intentionally engaging in behavior that amounts to financial abuse.
- **Crucially, it does NOT mean "witnessed symptoms of the abuse"** (e.g., "I saw someone with a black eye" does not, in itself, constitute witnessing the abuse under this law).
- **In summary:** If a child directly witnesses abuse as defined above, that act of witnessing is now considered child abuse.

Reporting Reminder

As always, as a mandated reporter, if you believe a minor is a victim of abuse or neglect, you should **make a report to DCS**. It is DCS's role to determine whether or not the report meets the criteria for investigation.

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