

**THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 2008**

- ¶ 341.5 All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

**GEORGIA STATE CODE  
SECTION 19-7-5**

19-7-5 Reporting of child abuse; when mandated or authorized; content of report; to whom made; immunity from liability; report based upon privileged communication; penalty for failure to report.

(a) The purpose of this Code section is to provide for the protection of children whose health and welfare are adversely affected and further threatened by the conduct of those responsible for their care and protection. It is intended that the mandatory reporting of such cases will cause the protective services of the state to be brought to bear on the situation in an effort to prevent further abuses, to protect and enhance the welfare of these children, and to preserve family life wherever possible. This Code section shall be liberally construed so as to carry out the purposes thereof.

(b) As used in this Code section, the term:

- (1) "Abused" means subjected to child abuse.
- (2) "Child" means any person under 18 years of age.
- (3) "Child abuse" means:

- (A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; provided, however, physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child;
- (B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;
- (C) Sexual abuse of a child; or
- (D) Sexual exploitation of a child.

However, no child who in good faith is being treated solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall, for that reason alone, be considered to be an "abused" child.

(3.1) "Sexual abuse" means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not that person's spouse to engage in any act which involves:

(4) "Sexual exploitation" means conduct by a child's parent or caretaker who allows, permits, encourages, or requires that child to engage in:

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- (A) Prostitution, as defined in Code Section 16-6-9; or
- (B) Sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual or print medium depicting such conduct, as defined in Code Section 16-12-100.

(c) (1) The following persons having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made as provided in this Code section:

- (A) Physicians licensed to practice medicine, interns, or residents;
- (B) Hospital or medical personnel;
- (C) Dentists;
- (D) Licensed psychologists and persons participating in internships to obtain licensing pursuant to Chapter 39 of Title 43;
- (E) Podiatrists;
- (F) Registered professional nurses or licensed practical nurses licensed pursuant to Chapter 24 of Title 43;
- (G) Professional counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists licensed pursuant to Chapter 10A of Title 43;
- (H) School teachers;
- (I) School administrators;
- (J) School guidance counselors, visiting teachers, school social workers, or school psychologists certified pursuant to Chapter 2 of Title 20;
- (K) Child welfare agency personnel, as that agency is defined pursuant to Code Section 49-5-12;
- (L) Child counseling personnel;
- (M) Child service organization personnel; or
- (N) Law enforcement personnel.

(2) If a person is required to report abuse pursuant to this subsection because that person attends to a child pursuant to such person's duties as a member of the staff of a hospital, school, social agency, or similar facility, that person shall notify the person in charge of the facility, or the designated delegate thereof, and the person so notified shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with this Code section. A staff member who makes a report to the person designated pursuant to this paragraph shall be deemed to have fully complied with this subsection.

(d) Any other person, other than one specified in subsection (c) of this Code section, who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is abused may report or cause reports to be made as provided in this Code section.

(e) An oral report shall be made as soon as possible by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney....

(f) Any person or persons, partnership, firm, corporation, association, hospital, or other entity participating in the making of a report or causing a report to be made to a child welfare agency providing protective services or to an appropriate police authority

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pursuant to this Code section or any other law or participating in any judicial proceeding or any other proceeding resulting therefrom shall in so doing be immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed, provided such participation pursuant to this Code section or any other law is made in good faith. Any person making a report, whether required by this Code section or not, shall be immune from liability as provided in this subsection.

(h) Any person or official required by subsection (c) of this Code section to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

**\*\*Please note: The Chancellor of the South Georgia Annual Conference recommends that clergy report any issues of child abuse.**