

## SCRANTON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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**18-001**

*Policy Subject:*  
**Child Services**

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**4.6.1**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the investigation and reporting of child abuse in accordance with Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (23 Pa.C.S.A. §6301, et seq.) and the Lackawanna County Child Abuse protocol.

### **II. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Scranton Police Department that all reports of child abuse and neglect shall be thoroughly investigated in accordance with this policy. Appropriate measures shall be taken which are consistent with state law to best protect the interests of the child.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

*Child Abuse –*

1. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
2. An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
3. Any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
4. Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life,

including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES**

##### **A. Complaints of child abuse**

1. Any officer receiving a report of alleged child abuse will take all necessary steps to ensure that the welfare of the child is immediately protected.
  - a. If the child is injured, the officer shall make arrangements for transportation to an appropriate medical facility and shall accompany the child to the facility.
  - b. A child may be taken into protective custody by a law enforcement officer if there is reasonable grounds to believe that the child is suffering from illness, injury, or is in imminent danger from his surroundings and that his removal is necessary, in accordance with 42 PA.C.S.A. 63, §6324.
2. Any officer coming into contact with any person in the following circumstances shall start or cause to be started a criminal investigation into suspected abuse. All normal criminal investigative procedures shall be followed.
  - a. A child, in which child abuse is suspected;
  - b. An adult, in which child abuse is alleged to have occurred while that person was under the age of eighteen (18); or
  - c. An adult, in which the adult is making an allegation of suspected abuse of a child.

##### **B. Interviews**

1. Generally, an attempt should be made to gather information from a parent, guardian, or caretaker initially. If required, initial interviews of child-victims shall be limited in scope to substantiate a complaint of abuse. This may include a brief minimum facts interview indicating that abuse has occurred and identifying the perpetrator(s).
2. Except in situations demanding an immediate in-depth interview, a forensic interview shall be scheduled with the Children's Advocacy Center. The interview will be conducted by a trained Forensic Interviewer with the cooperation of the Multi-Disciplinary Investigative Team.

##### **C. Notifications and Reporting**

1. Upon receiving a complaint of child abuse, the officer shall notify his/her immediate supervisor. The supervisor will notify, or instruct the officer to notify:
  - a. Lackawanna County Children and Youth Services
  - b. Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office Child Abuse Unit
  - c. The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) will be notified by the officer or detective conducting the follow-up investigation. The initial officer

should only schedule the CAC interview if he/she will be conducting the follow-up investigation and/or charging the suspect.

2. Police officers are mandated reporters of child abuse. Reports of child abuse shall be made immediately by telephone to the Department of Human Services of the Commonwealth via Childline (800) 932-0313 or electronically via the Childline Portal.
3. A written report shall be submitted, via physical or electronic means, to the department or county agency assigned to the case (CYS) within 48 hours. The officer/detective conducting the follow-up investigation will be responsible for submitting the report.
4. Information to be included in the report shall include, at a minimum:
  - a. The names and addresses of the child and parents and all others (e.g., baby sitter, relatives) responsible for the care of the child if known.
  - b. Where the suspected abuse occurred and the time or time period of the suspected abuse.
  - c. The age and sex of the subjects in the investigation.
  - d. The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or siblings of the child.
  - e. The name and relationship of the person(s) responsible for causing the suspected abuse, if known, and any evidence of prior abuse by that person(s).
  - f. Information in regards to the family composition.
  - g. The source of the report and where that person can be reached.
  - h. Any actions taken by the reporting source and/or investigating officer(s), including the taking of photographs, removal or keeping of the child, or notifying the medical examiner or coroner, etc.
  - i. Any other information required for a complete and detailed investigation.

By Order Of:

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Chief Carl R. Graziano  
Superintendent of Police  
Scranton Police Department