

What to Do if You Suspect Harm to Someone with a Disability

If you have any reason to believe an individual with a disability has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at imminent risk of harm, please contact someone to help immediately. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE SURE HARM HAS/IS/WILL HAPPEN.**

Report any credible concerns and allow trained investigators to get involved. You can report anonymously. You can contact as many relevant groups (see below) as you would like.

Preparing for the Call

The most important thing you can do is call with any reasonable suspicion. You are likely to be asked the following questions, no matter who you call. It is okay if you do not know the answers. Just do your best.

- *What is the name of the individual? How old are they approximately? Where do they live? Do you know where the possible abuse occurred? Who was involved? Why are you concerned? Does this person have a guardian? Do you want to remain anonymous?*

Immediate Harm Concerns

If you have any reasonable belief that someone is in harm's way immediately or will be in the imminent future, **call 911** and report the emergency. Let them know someone with a developmental disability is involved and asked for an officer trained in working with people with disabilities to respond, if possible.

Suspected Harm to a Child

If you have any reason to believe a child has been harmed, immediately contact Child Protective Services. The **Virginia state hotline number is 800-552-7096** and website is <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/index.cgi> or <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency/index.cgi>

Suspected Harm to an Adult

If you have any reason to believe an adult (18+) has been harmed, immediately contact Adult Protective Services. The **Virginia state hotline number is (888) 832-3858** and website is <https://www.vadars.org/aps/AdultProtServ.htm> or <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency/index.cgi>

Concerns about Rights

If you are concerned that someone's human rights (e.g., right to speak on the phone, right to safe environment) are being violated in any way in a setting with professional (paid) providers, contact our state Human Rights team. Ann Pascoe (**804-297-1503**, Ann.Pascoe@DBHDS.virginia.gov) is the Northern Virginia representative.

<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/assets/doc/QMD/human-rights/human-rights-contacts.pdf>

Concerns about Service Providers and Policies

If you are concerned that a licensed service provider for Developmental Disability Waiver services is not treating someone with a disability appropriately (e.g., not filing proper paperwork on services provided, not following their own policies), contact our state Licensing team. Tina Whitfield-Johnson (Tina.WhitfieldJohnson@DBHDS.virginia.gov) is the contact for Northern Virginia. http://dbhds.virginia.gov/assets/doc/QMD/OL/OL-Regional-Contacts_2_4_19.pdf

Mandated Reporters

Most professional in the disability field (e.g., direct care staff, social workers, Support Coordinators, service providers) are mandated reporters. That means they must report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to all appropriate parties. You can learn more and see resources for mandated reporters online.

<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/abuse/mr.cgi>

www.TheArcofNoVA.org and ask questions at www.thearcofnova.org/answers

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