Online Texas Abuse Hotline – User Guide

Contents

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Introduction

The **Department of Family and Protective Services** (DFPS) provides the **Online Texas Abuse Hotline** as a secure website for reporting suspicions of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 years or older.

Emergencies and Life-Threatening Situations

If you need to report an emergency or life-threatening situation, call your local law enforcement agency or 9-1-1 immediately. The Online Texas Abuse Hotline should NOT be used in urgent or emergency situations. Reports made through this website take up to 24 hours to process.
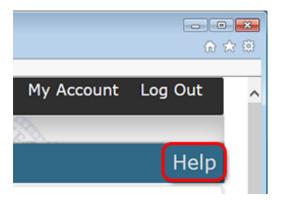
Purpose of this User Guide

The purpose of this user guide is to provide general information and instructions to people who use the Online Texas Abuse Hotline reporting tool.

Getting Answers

You will find answers to a lot of questions in this document. Additional and updated information is available at the Report Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation page.

Online Help

Online Help is the built-in help system for the Online Texas Abuse Hotline. It's a place to get quick answers to common questions and instructions for how to do things. You can access **Online Help** while you are working on a report.

Simply click the **Help** link in the top right corner, and a new tab will open with information helpful to the page you are on, such as:
- The purpose of the page
- How to access the page
- Word and acronym meanings found on the page
- How to perform specific tasks on the page

There are five icons in **Online Help** that help make it easier to find information:

Icon	Description
	The **Table of Contents** looks like a bulleted list of items. When you press the Table of Contents icon, all Online Help contents appear in the left pane. Select any item to see the topic details.
	The **Index** icon looks like an index card with A-Z on it. When you press the Index icon, a list of keywords appears in the pane below. Select a word or phrase to see where it appears in Online Help.
	The **Search** icon looks like a magnifying glass. This icon allows you to search for a word or phrase. The results will include any topic with the word or phrase you searched.
	The **Glossary** icon looks like an open book. It displays an alphabetical list of commonly used words, phrases, and acronyms that occur within the Online Texas Abuse Hotline.
	The **Print** icon looks like a printer. This icon allows you to print the topic from Online Help.

Hearing Impaired
If this is an emergency and you are deaf and equipped with a Teletypewriter (TTY), call Relay Texas by dialing 711 or 1-800-735-2989. Tell the relay agent you need to call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

Frequently Asked Questions (Online)
An FAQ page is available to answer questions that you may have about online reporting. Please follow the link to the FAQ Page. [Update link]

Terms and Definitions
Using the correct terms when reporting abuse or neglect is very important. For the full list of up-to-date terms that are useful for reporting abuse, please follow the links to the online terms and definitions.

Child Protective Services [provide link]
Adult Protective Services [provide link]
Child Care Licensing [provide link]
Online Help Resources on SharePoint [Remove this link]

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Types of Online Reporters

There are several options for types of online reporters. Each of the options below are secure methods for reporting suspicions of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 years or older.

Registered User

As a Registered User, you will create an account with your name and contact information. The function allows you to save the progress of filling out the report, leave, and come back later to complete the report. The saved draft is accessible from the landing page which includes a list of draft reports. If you do not return to the draft report and submit it within 48 hours of the initial save as draft, then the system will automatically submit the report. The system will allow you to save a draft an unlimited number of times during the first 48 hours from the first draft save.

Guest User

As a Guest User you will be asked to identify yourself and give us contact information such as a phone number and email address. This will allow us to confirm your report by email and allow an investigator to follow up for more information, if needed.

Anonymous User

As an Anonymous User you will not be asked to identify yourself or give contact information. Since we won't know who you are or how to contact you, you will not receive any confirmation of your report. If you need to provide additional information later, you will be required to submit an entirely new report.

Navigation

Navigation in the Online Texas Abuse Hotline is set up to make your online report as simple and efficient as possible.

Main Sections

You will find four main sections as explained below. The section you are currently working on will be highlighted. Make sure you complete the section you are working on before going to the next section. The major sections include:
1. People Involved
2. What Happened
3. Safety Concerns
4. Report Summary

People Involved → What Happened → Safety Concerns → Report Summary

People Involved

In the *People Involved* section, provide detailed information about everyone involved in the incident; alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, others living in the house/facility and anyone else who can provide information about the incident. Multiple people can be added to each category.

What Happened

In the *What Happened?* section, you will provide details on the specific allegations and events regarding your concern.

Safety Concerns

In the *Safety Concerns* section, provide details regarding domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as the living conditions and other safety concerns.

Report Summary

After information is entered for *People Involved, What Happened*, and *Safety Concerns*, the *Report Summary* provides an opportunity to review all of the information entered. You may select to edit any of the information, or submit the abuse report.

Customized Questions

The Online Texas Abuse Hotline is designed to work as quickly and efficiently as possible. Questions for entering detail adjust based on the information you provide.

Example:

When you begin entering information for the *Primary Alleged Victim*, you will see a list of topics with check boxes next to them.

In this example we see the reporter checked boxes to indicate some knowledge of Name; Date of birth or Approximate age; Primary Language; and Gender, race, ethnicity, Social Security Number. Questions will appear on the page so the reporter can provide information for each of these topics. In this example, the reporter will not be asked to provide information about the alleged victim's phone number or special needs.

Navigation Buttons

Navigation buttons are built into the online reporting tool. They provide all the navigation you will need to complete your report, and should be used instead of back and forward buttons in the browser.

Button Icon	Button Name	Description
Save as Draft	Save as Draft	Registered users have the option to save a report as a draft to be finished at a later time.
Back	Back	Select the **Back** button to go back to the previous page.
Continue	Continue	When all of the information is correctly entered, select the **Continue** button to continue.
Delete	Delete	Select the **Delete** button to delete an entry. Use caution, because deleted information cannot be retrieved.
Edit	Edit	Select the **Edit** button next to a section that you wish to edit.
Add Another Entry	Add Another Entry	Select **Add Another Entry** to add additional people or incidents of the allegations.

Summary Page

When a summary page appears, you can review and edit that section. Click **Edit** to make changes. To report another incident of the same allegation, click **Add Another Entry**. Click **Continue** when you are finished with that section.

Create an Account

To report as a *Registered User* for the first time, you must create a password-protected account and profile for your security and convenience.

Guest Users and **Anonymous** Users do not create an account.

Account Information

Create a username of your choice, and add your first and last name, gender, email address, physical address, phone numbers, place of employment, and days and times you can be reached.

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Security Questions

Choose three different security questions and enter answers for them. These questions will be used to retrieve your username and/or password, if needed. Check the **I am not a robot** checkbox and then select **Next** to complete your registration.

Citizen Registration

A message appears on the *Citizen Registration* page notifying you that an email has been sent to the address you provided. Follow the instructions in the email to log in with the username you created and the temporary password assigned to you.

Change Password

When you have logged in, you will be required to change your password. Read the password rules, then enter your new password in the fields provided. The red x's in the list of password rules will turn green as you are typing your password, showing that you are adhering to the rules. Select **Next**.

HHS Home Page

After successful login and password change, you will be taken to the **Texas Health and Human Services System** home page. Under My Applications, click **EReport** to begin reporting abuse.

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Create a New Report

Acknowledgement

The Acknowledgement section is different for Registered Users and Guest Users.

Types of Users

Both Registered Users and Guest Users must check a box to acknowledge that the situation you have to report is NOT an emergency before you can continue. If it is an emergency, contact law enforcement at by dialing 911

Registered Users

After you check the box, Registered Users will be asked to update or verify your contact information. You will also be asked how you found out about the situation you are reporting. Verify that your information is accurate and select the Continue button when you are ready to start your report.

Guest Users

Explanations are provided for Guest User and Anonymous User after which you may choose between the two types of reporters. Guest Users will be asked to provide
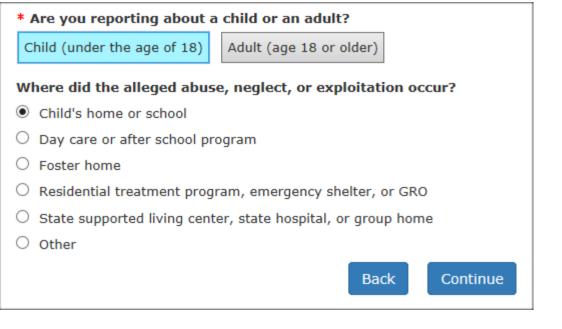
contact information along with how you found out about the situation you are reporting. Anonymous Users will only be asked how you found out about the situation you are reporting. Select the Continue button when you are ready to start your report.

Select Child or Adult

A welcome page provides an overview of the three main sections of the reporting site. You will select whether the victim is a Child (under the age of 18) or an Adult (age 18 or older). Making either selection will open a question about where the alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurred. Make your selection and select **Continue** to continue.

Example:

In this example, the reporter selected **Child (under the age of 18),** and indicated that the alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation took place at the **Child's home or school**.

People Involved

In the *People Involved*, you will be asked to provide detailed information about everyone involved in the incident; alleged victims, alleged perpetrators, others living in the home and anyone one else who can provide information about the incident. As you continue through the questionnaire, you can add multiple people in each category.

If possible, provide the following information for each person involved in the incident you are reporting:
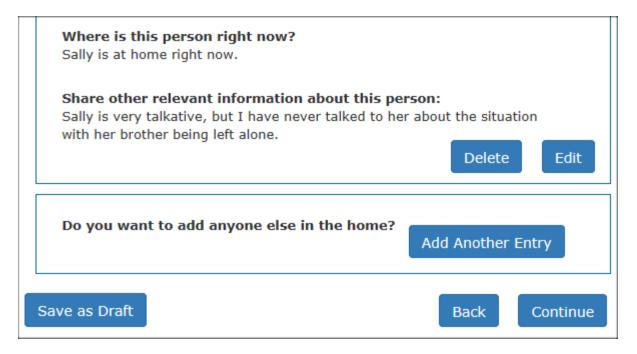
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- Names
- Dates of birth or approximate ages
- Primary language
- Special needs
- Contact information

You may also be asked how each person was involved in the incident you are reporting. Select from the following list.

1. Alleged Victim
2. Alleged Perpetrator
3. Both Alleged Victim and Alleged Perpetrator
4. Neither/Unknown

Summary Page

At the *People in the Home Summary* page, review the information that you added under the people involved. If changes are needed, click the **Edit** button. If you need to add another entry, select **Add Another Entry**. If you are finished with the **People Involved** section, select **Continue**.

Where is this person right now?
Sally is at home right now.

Share other relevant information about this person:
Sally is very talkative, but I have never talked to her about the situation with her brother being left alone.

Delete   Edit

Do you want to add anyone else in the home?
Add Another Entry

Save as Draft   Back   Continue

What Happened?

In the *What Happened?* section, you will provide detail on the specific allegations and events regarding your concern.

Provide specific concerns you have and reasons for reporting the incident. Be very detailed in your descriptions. For example, use specific dates and names. Avoid using pronouns. The descriptions provided are used to decide whether your report needs an investigation. We will not contact you for clarification to make this decision.

Allegations

An allegation is a formal claim against someone which prompts an investigation. Allegation definitions for either a child or an adult will have some differences. The best practice will be to click the links below to access the most recent online definitions that are related to the allegation you are reporting. Overall, most abuse and neglect allegations are covered by the following topics:

1. Abandonment
2. Emotional Abuse
3. Fetal Alcohol/Drug Exposure
4. Medical Neglect
5. Neglectful Supervision
6. Physical Abuse
7. Physical Neglect
8. Sexual Abuse
9. Labor/Sex Trafficking
10. Other

Each allegation you select will require you to fill in related information about what you have observed. Though accurate terms are important when reporting abuse or neglect, you might not find an exact match. If you are reporting something that does not fit into the defined allegations, you may select **Other** and explain the abuse you are reporting. Our trained staff will review your report and determine an allegation. For the full list of up-to-date terms that are useful for reporting abuse, please follow the links to the online terms and definitions.

Child Protective Services [provide link]
Adult Protective Services [provide link]
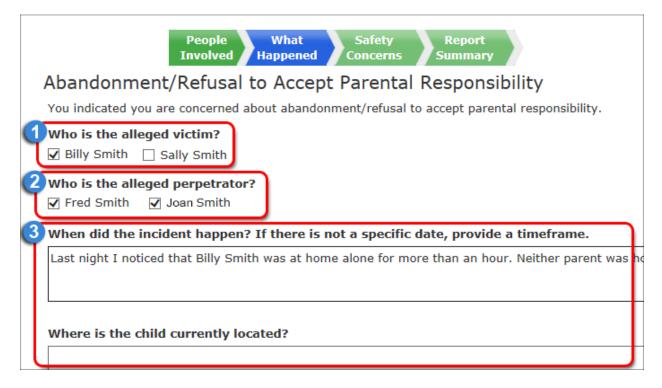Child Care Licensing [provide link]

Describe Each Allegation

After you have selected the allegation(s) associated with your report, you will be asked to describe each allegation. For each allegation, you will be asked to provide the information listed below.

1. Select the Alleged Victim
2. Select the Alleged Perpetrator
3. Provide as many details as possible so that we may know how to respond
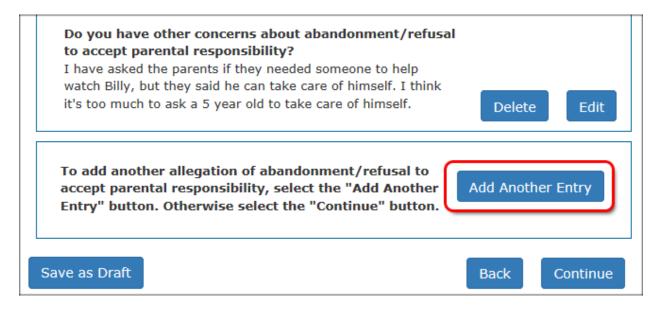
Example:

In this example, the reporter selected **Billy Smith** as the alleged victim, and both **Fred Smith** and **Joan Smith** as the alleged perpetrators. The reporter has begun to provide details about the alleged incident of Abandonment/Refusal to Accept Parental Responsibility.

How to link the allegation(s) to a person(s)

If there are multiple people involved and all the details of the alleged incident are the same for each person, select all the people for the allegation and fill out the allegation once.

If there are multiple people involved, but the details of the alleged incident are different for each person, select the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator, and fill out the incident details for those people. When you finish, click **Continue**. You will see a summary page where you can select **Add Another Entry** for the allegation.

Selecting **Add Another Entry** takes you to the same **Allegation** page again, so you can select another combination of alleged victim and alleged perpetrator, and then fill out the incident details for those people.

Summary Page

At the *Allegation Summary* page, review the information that you added under each specific allegation. If changes are needed, click the **Edit** button. If you need to add another entry, select **Add Another Entry**. If you are finished with that allegation, select **Continue**.

Safety Concerns

In the *Safety Concerns* section, provide details regarding domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, living conditions and other safety concerns.

The *Safety Concerns* section is available for you to explain if there are concerns about weapons, gang involvement, or if there are people, pets, or conditions that could be a danger.

Family Dynamics and Living Conditions

The next section allows you to describe any concerns you have about the victim's family dynamics and living conditions. Choose from the following options to add more information:

1. Domestic violence
2. Indication of alcohol or drug abuse
3. Living conditions

Family Dynamics and Living Conditions for Facility Type Locations

This section allows you to describe any concerns you have about the facility environment.

Summary Page

At the *Safety Concerns Summary* page, you can review and edit that section. Click **Edit** to make changes. To add another entry, click **Add Another Entry**. Click **Continue** when you are finished.

Report Summary

The *Report Summary* is a summary of all the information contained in your report. You can review and edit any page from the *Report Summary* page. This includes the following sections:

1. Reporter Information
2. People information
3. What Happened? (Allegations)
4. Safety Concerns

Review the information that you added under each of the sections. If changes are needed, click the **Edit** button for that section. If additional people or allegations are needed, select the **Add Another Entry** button for that section. When you have completed your review and no longer have edits to any of the sections, select **Finish** to submit the report.

Submit Confirmation

After you submit your report, you are taken to the *Submit Confirmation* page. You may review the information you submitted. The page contains the following information:

1. E-Report Confirmation Number
2. Date Submitted
3. Instructions with contact information
4. Report Summary
5. Navigation Options
6. Print Button

Printing the *Submit Confirmation* is optional, however it may be helpful for your records if you need to refer to it or submit a similar report at another time.