



**GUIDANCE STATEMENT: RESPONSIBILITIES OF WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC LIBRARY WORKERS
REGARDING THE REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
2012-1**

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As public employees with specific responsibility to and a long history of serving children and their caregivers, public librarians and public library workers definitely should be concerned with the welfare of the children in their communities. The laws of West Virginia have amplified this point through the years.

What's going on with regard to child abuse?

The West Virginia Legislature, in the 2012 Regular Session passed [Senate Bill 161 \(SB 161\)](#) which strengthened penalties against those who are required by their positions of care and/or trust to report child abuse and child sexual abuse to the authorities. It amended existing laws and added persons to the list of those required to report such abuse, and reiterated that the entire adult population of the state has responsibilities to protect children. The law also mandated the provision of training by the Department of Health and Human Services in recognizing the signs of child abuse and child sexual abuse for those who are required to report. Keep in mind that this law was refining/amending earlier laws which already included the public library workforce.

Does this mean me? What do I have to do?

These amendments to the existing laws are a little gray in some areas, but one passage of the existing law remaining is very clear. It basically states ***employee (s), coach(es) or volunteer(s) of an entity that provides organized activities for children*** must report cases or suspicion of child abuse or child sexual abuse within 48 hours to the Department of Health and Human Resources and/or the State Police or law enforcement personnel. This would obviously include public libraries and public library workers.

The law clearly states that the reporting person must also report the event to their superior (particularly to the administrator/library director of the agency). That person (the superior) may supplement the report already made or file an additional report.

If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the West Virginia Library Commission's Library Development Division.