

Children are valued and cared for in Arkansas. The state has passed laws concerning child discipline in order to protect children from physical abuse and neglect. As a parent or caretaker, it is important to know the law in Arkansas.

According to state law, the word “abuse” does not include some physical discipline of a child for the purposes of restraining or correcting the child. The age, size, and condition of the child, and the location and frequency of injuries determine whether bodily harm is reasonable and moderate or unacceptable.

Arkansas laws have made certain actions illegal. For any person entrusted with , including parents or guardians, it is illegal to use extreme or repeated cruelty. In general, the law prohibits physical, psychological, or sexual abuse of any child.

DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

P.O Box 1437, Slot S560
700 Main Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-1437

Phone: 501-682-8770
Fax: 501-682-6968

Additional Resources

Child Care

- ◆ Family Support (Day Care Eligibility) offers services based on family size and income: 1-800-322-8176
- ◆ Child Care may be able to find a day care in your area and may help get vouchers to pay for child care if you qualify: 1-800-445-3316

Food

- ◆ Arkansas Rice Depot will refer callers to locations in their area that provide food at reduced cost: 501-565-8855
- ◆ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamp program) information: 1-800-482-8988

Support Groups

- ◆ Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment: 501-686-9866

Shelter:

- ◆ Women and Children First (shelter for battered women): 1-800-332-4443
- ◆ Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes (emergency shelter for children, housing for pregnant teens, and counseling services): 1-800-838-2272
- ◆ Promise House Maternity Home: 501-228-9720

Medical:

- ◆ ARKids First provides medical insurance to qualified applicants: 1-888-474-8275
- ◆ Medicaid information: 1-800-482-8988
- ◆ National Immunization Hotline (CDC) refers callers to free or reduced-cost clinics where vaccines and immunizations are available: 1-800-232-4636

Miscellaneous:

- ◆ Family Service Agency provides food for the homeless, food and clothing for families, and some furniture for families whose houses have burned down:

Conway	501-329-1712
Jonesboro	870-932-3785
El Dorado	870-329-1712
Little Rock	501-374-9296
Fayetteville	479-521-2151
Pine Bluff	870-534-0504
Fort Smith	479-783-6145
Texarkana	870-774-2701
Hot Springs	501-623-1628

- ◆ Saint Francis House may be able to help pay for prescription medicines and provide food and clothing for low-income families: 501-664-5036

Care * Commit * Connect

Together for Arkansas Children and Families

Know the Law: Raising Children in Arkansas



A Guide to Legal Child Discipline

Physical Abuse As a parent or guardian, you are morally and legally responsible for the welfare of your child. Please remember the following actions are considered unreasonable, as written in state law (this list does not include all punishable actions; for more info, call 501-682-8541):

- ◆ Striking a child on the face or head
- ◆ Shaking a child under age three
- ◆ Shaking any child in a way that causes physical injury
- ◆ Striking a child with a closed fist
- ◆ Throwing, kicking, burning, biting, or cutting a child
- ◆ Interfering with a child's breathing
- ◆ Threatening a child with a deadly weapon
- ◆ Pinching, striking, or biting a child's genitals
- ◆ Causing greater than passing pain or leave more than minor temporary marks
- ◆ Tying a child to a fixed or heavy object or binding or tying a child's limbs together
- ◆ Giving a child or permitting a child to consume or inhale a poisonous or noxious substance not prescribed by a physician that can interfere with normal functions
- ◆ Giving a child or permitting a child to consume or inhale a substance that can alter their mood, if it has *not* been prescribed by a physician, including but not limited to: marijuana; alcohol (except alcohol used in a recognized and established religious ceremony); narcotics; inappropriate over-the-counter drugs or even appropriate over-the-counter drugs if a person purposely administers an overdose to a child and the child suffers negative consequences from the overdose or inappropriate over-the-counter drug
- ◆ Exposing a child to chemicals that have the capacity to interfere with normal functions, such as chemicals used or generated during the making of methamphetamine
- ◆ Causing a child to believe they have an illness they do not have (Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) if the incident is reported and confirmed by medical staff or a medical facility

Neglect Children depend on adults to provide for them. Parents or guardians are held responsible by law to take care of their children's basic needs. If the caretakers do not see that children's basic needs are met, this is called neglect. State law declares the following actions to be neglect (this list does not include all punishable actions; for more info, call 501-682-8541):

- ◆ Failure to prevent abuse if the caretaker has reason to believe the child is being abused
- ◆ Failure or refusal to provide food, clothing, shelter, and education for the child
- ◆ Failure to provide necessary medical treatment, unless the responsible person is financially unable to do so
- ◆ Failure to protect the child from abandonment, abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect, or even another parent or guardian

**If you even suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, please call this confidential, 24-hour hotline:
1-800-482-5964**

It is against the law to knowingly make a FALSE REPORT! A first offense is a Class A misdemeanor and any further offense is a Class D felony.

NOTE: The Division of Children and Family Services strives to keep all of its publications such as this one up-to-date. However, while this brochure may be accurate at the time of printing, the Division of Children and Family Services is not responsible for inaccuracies due to subsequent changes in state law.

Consequences To ensure the safety and welfare of children, adults are held responsible for their actions towards children.

If a parent or caretaker abuses or neglects a child, there are serious consequences, including fines and jail time.

Endangering the welfare of a child in the first degree is a **Class D felony**. This occurs when someone purposely deserts a child less than 10 years old, creating a substantial risk of death or serious physical injury. A Class D felony could result in a **\$10,000 fine and a up to 6 years in prison**.

Endangering the welfare of a child in the second degree is a **Class A misdemeanor**. This could mean a **\$1,000 fine and up to 1 year in prison**.

It is important to remember that **there are services available to help parents care for their children**. You may contact your local DHS office for more information about resources available to help you and your family. Contact info for each county office can be found under "County Offices" at www.state.ar.us/dhs. If you do not have internet access, please call 501-682-8549 to get contact info for your county office.

The Arkansas Resource Information CyberCenter (ARIC) lists community service organizations. Visit the ARIC website at www.state.ar.us/aric

Please see the back of this brochure for a partial listing of agencies and organizations that are willing to provide assistance to children and families in Arkansas.