



## Report on 2023 Survey of Mandated Reporting in Humboldt County

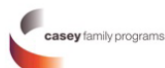
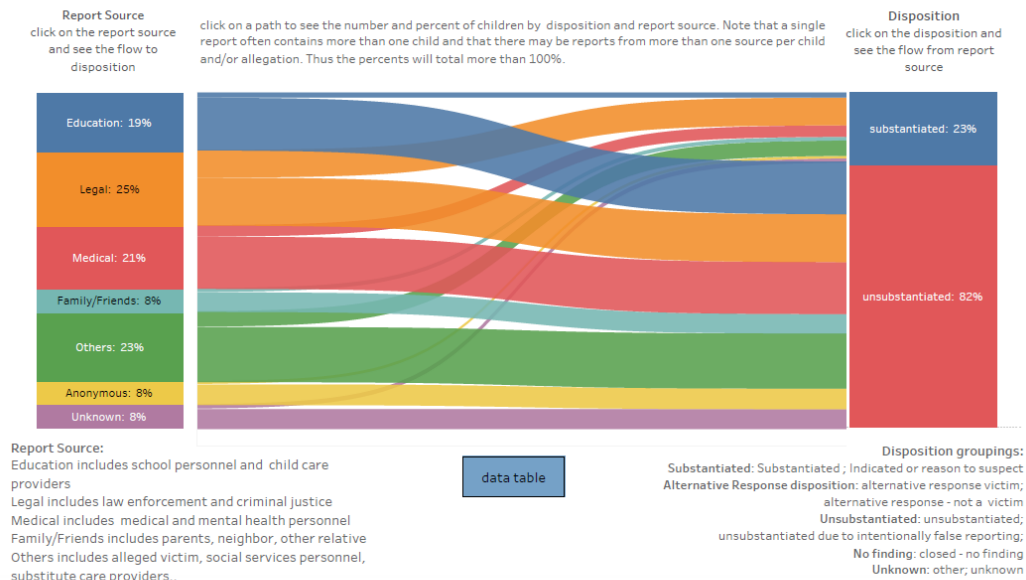
### BACKGROUND

During CAPCC’s tenure on the state-wide Citizens Review Panel (CRP) for child abuse prevention in 2023, it became clear that there were problems with the current Mandated Reporter system that have negatively impacted families, particularly families of color. CAPCC convened a committee to review our concerns and began to work on a local survey. The CRP provided strong data that pointed to the problem of overrepresentation of people of color among mandated reports. CAPCC recognizes this as a serious problem here, but we decided that was beyond our capacity to investigate and we chose a small piece of the problem to tackle – the type of training mandated reporters are provided. We have attached a summary of the State Mandated Reporter Taskforce Report to provide the larger context in which our survey data may be viewed.

We were presented with compelling evidence that teachers are reporting child abuse at very high levels and the ensuing investigations have a low level of substantiation. The following chart conveys this compelling data:

**Figure 1.** Percent of mandated reports made for child abuse/neglect, correlated with percent of reports substantiated by Child Welfare investigations.

The data on this report come from NCANDS. This data source starts with reports that have been accepted for investigation. Data about hotline calls that do not result in an investigation are not available.





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That is, teachers are reporting cases that are not meeting the threshold of child abuse and neglect. That suggested to us that better training could improve this situation, and we set out to assess the current information on training requirements among a selection of mandated reporters in Humboldt County<sup>1</sup>.

### **THE SURVEY**

Our committee included representatives from HCOE, CASA, Child Welfare, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Changing Tides. We drew up a list of potential respondents and distributed an email request with a survey and offered an incentive of being considered for a \$25.00 gift card for each response submitted. The audience for our survey was not scientifically designed; we used member listservs and personal requests to medical clinics, teachers' groups and others we knew to be mandated reporters.

### **SURVEY RESPONSES**

We received 67 responses and were able to reach many teachers, behavioral health specialists, social workers, medical providers and more. Our questions focused on how frequently their training was required, how comfortable or confident they felt in making mandated reports, and what duration of time their training required to complete (see Figures 2 and 3).

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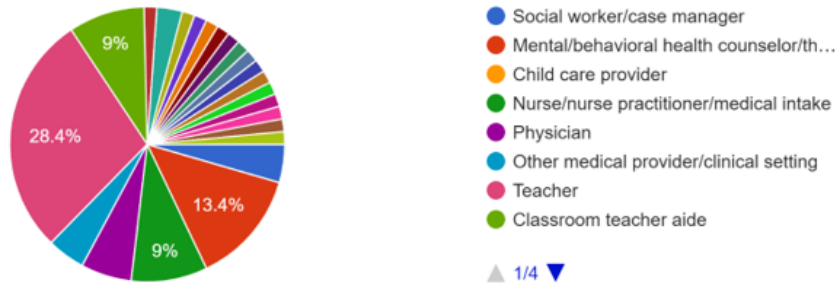
<sup>1</sup> As we received updates on the proceedings of the State Taskforce's subcommittees, it became clear that the overreporting by teachers was also related to specific training for school employees that is provided through their insurance carrier and is governed by an evaluation of risk liability for teachers who do not report suspicions of abuse and neglect, rather than a focus on the impact on families of unwarranted investigations by child protective services. We do not address that issue other than to acknowledge its relevance to the larger issue.



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**Figure 2.** Professions/occupational area of respondents to CAPCC’s Mandated Reporter survey.

What is your profession/job/activity that requires you to report child abuse/neglect?  
67 responses



Role	Percentage
Teacher	28.4
Mental/behavioral Counselor/Therapist	13.4
Nurse/NP/Medical Intake	12
Classroom Teacher Aide	9
Physician	6
Non-classroom School Employee	7.5
Other Medical Provider/Clinical Setting	4.5
Social Worker/Case Manager	4.5
School Psychologist	4.5
Academic Counselor	3
Behavioral Support Aide	1.5
Parent	1.5
School IT	1.5
School Administrator	1.5
Athletic/Coach/Recreation	1.5

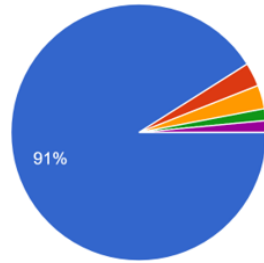


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**Figure 3.** How many respondents are required to take a Mandated Reporter training.<sup>2</sup>

Are you required to complete a training course as a Mandated Reporter?

67 responses



- Yes, I'm required to complete a training course
- No, it is not a requirement for me
- Although it is not required, it is recommended
- regular or annual training is not required. It was part of our new employee orientation.
- not any longer

Training Requirement	Percentage
Required to complete a training	91
Not a requirement for me	3
Required, not recommended	3
Onboarding, but not required regularly	1.5
Not any longer	1.5

<sup>2</sup> Errata Note: the third item listed in the table is incorrect. It should state, "Not required, but recommended."



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### TYPES OF TRAININGS

The type of trainings that mandated reporters were required to take varied. Generally, there were three types of training – an automated online program (the most frequently mentioned), an online presentation, and either an in-person presentation or an in-person presenter of an online presentation (see Figure 4).

If your employer requires training, what features characterize your training experience?

64 responses



Type of Training Format	Percentage
Automated online program	71.9
Online presentation	21.9
N/A	3.2
In-person presentation	1.6
Online with live presentation	1.6

**Figure 4.** Type/format of training listed by respondents.

### LENGTH OF TRAINING SESSIONS

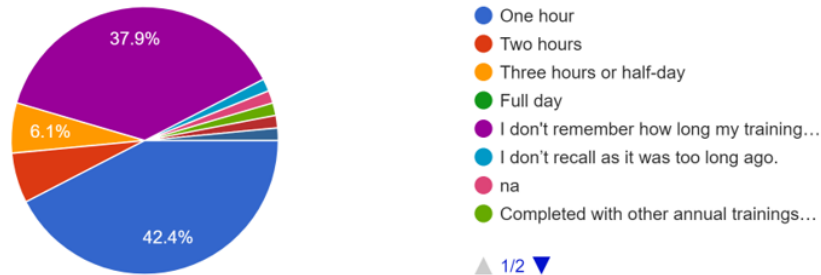
The most often duration of a training was one hour (42.4%). 39% of respondents did not remember how much time they spent on the training. A very small number reported a training that lasted more than a day, and less than 5% reported it was embedded in an overall training and they don't recall how much time was allocated specifically for Mandated Reporting. A small percentage (12.2%) reported taking a two- or three-hour training. reported a one-hour training (see Figure 5).



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**Figure 5.** Length of training sessions reported by respondents.

How long is the training you took?  
66 responses



Length of Training	Percentage
One hour	42.4
I don't remember	39
Three hours or half-day	6.1
Two hours	6.1
Part of overall training [no idea how much time the MR training took]	4.5
More than a day	1.5
N/A	1.5

### FREQUENCY OF TRAINING

Although 91% of the respondents said they were required to take the training, there was a range of how often they had refresher courses. 68.7% reported having to take the training upon employment and at specific intervals. 15% of respondents reported they take the training annually. 7.5% reported having to do the training once, during on-boarding.

There is a concern that since so many trainings are “canned” - that is, recorded and offered remotely - likely taken online with little opportunity for discussion or reflection - it is impossible to determine whether or not legislative changes or new developments in regulatory practice are communicated in a timely manner, or at all (see Figure 6).



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**Figure 6.** Frequency of requirement to take the Mandated Reporter training.

How frequently are you required to take a Mandated Reporter training?

67 responses



Training Frequency	Percentage
Once and at specific intervals	68.7
Every year	15
Once, during onboarding	7.5
I don't know	4.5
At renewal of licensure	1.5
N/A	1.5

### CONFIDENCE OF REPORTERS

Most respondents felt well-prepared to make reports and confident about their determination to report. 68.2% of respondents reported feeling confident or very confident about making a report, with 13.6% reporting that they could use additional support (see Figure 7 and Figure 8).

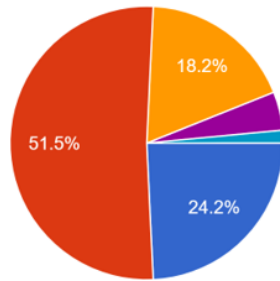


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**Figure 7.** Respondents understanding of knowing when a report is necessary

How would you describe your understanding when you need to make a report?

66 responses



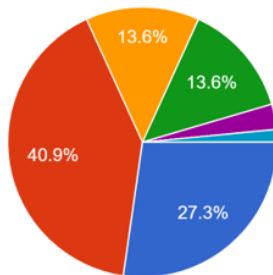
- Very strong - I make reports on my own and serve as a resource to my colleagues...
- Strong - I know when to make a report
- Somewhat strong - I know to report for certain situations, but other situations...
- I do not understand when to make a report
- Somewhat strong, I know to report for certain situations, but other situations...
- Strong, I know when to make a report

What is your level of understanding about reporting?	Percentage
Strong, I know when to report	51.5
Very strong, I make reports on my own	24.2
Somewhat strong, some situations I'm not sure	18.2

**Figure 8.** Respondents' self-confidence in completing an official report of suspected child abuse/neglect

How confident do you feel about completing an official report of suspected child abuse/neglect?

66 responses



- Very confident - I have submitted many reports and support my co-workers on...
- Confident - I know how to make the report
- Somewhat confident - I feel prepared to make the report
- I could use additional support to make a report
- Confident, I know how to make the re...
- Somewhat confident, I feel prepared t...

Confidence level when making a report	Percentage
Confident, I know how	40.9
Very confident, I have helped others as well	27.3
Somewhat confident, I feel prepared	13.6
I could use additional support	13.6





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### DISCUSSION

While this issue is certainly larger than our survey can address, we believe we can comment on some of the issues that have come up in the controversy around Mandated Reporting. This survey sought information on the capacity of the mandated reporter training in this county to adequately prepare mandated reporters to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and to know how to make a report to appropriate authorities. At the very least, we see that there is not a uniform system of training, nor a consistent message provided by trainings across the variety of professionals who are mandated reporters. Neither is there evidence of a reliable method of communicating changes in laws or practice.

1. Most mandated reporter trainings have traditionally emphasized that the determination of abuse or neglect is NOT the responsibility of the reporter, but rather the work of social workers in Child Welfare who are well-trained in detecting levels of abuse or neglect that meet the requirements for investigation. In this regard, the training is successful, and teachers are closely following their training to make the report without full inquiry. Teachers have neither the training nor the time to distinguish the fine lines between evidence of poverty or great need and evidence of abuse or neglect that threatens the wellbeing of a child or children within a family.
2. Some critics of the Mandated Reporter system have called for teachers to be removed from the list of Mandated Reporters because their reports are so often unsubstantiated. CAPCC would not agree with such a radical change in policy, because teachers are often the professionals who spend the most time with a child and have a history of their situations over time. Their privileged perspective is important in recommending further scrutiny.
3. However, our concern (and it is echoed by the State Taskforce) is that incentives for teachers to report abuse and neglect drive more frequent reporting than is appropriate and this circumstance has a damaging impact on families that are referred for intrusive and disruptive investigations when there really is not proper cause. More extensive training could remediate this problem.

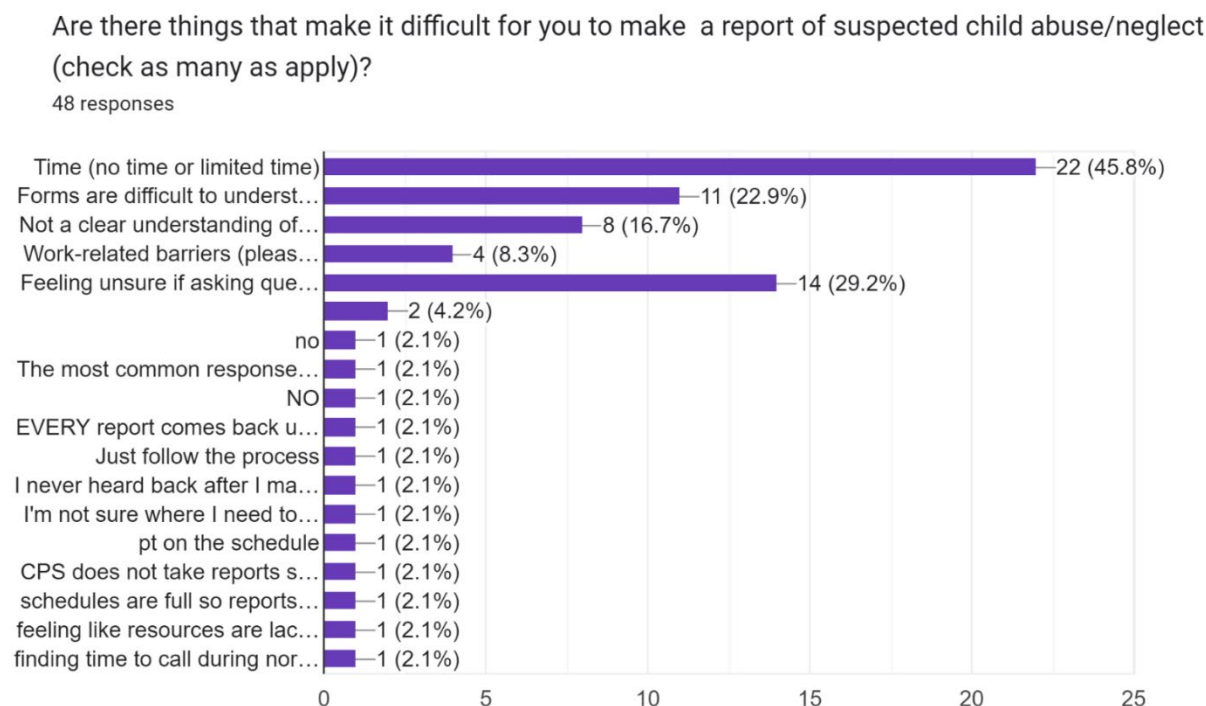


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- CAPCC is aware that the module required of most teachers in Humboldt County is a one-hour training. Even if repeated annually, such a limited course is likely insufficient to address the many nuances that implicit bias, definitions of abuse and neglect and the likely signs that may signal such circumstances that teachers face in real life. Reporting abuse and neglect requires a complex and fine-grained knowledge that is impossible to cover in a one-hour training.

We received some comments about what makes it difficult for mandated reporters to make reports, in spite of their self-report of confidence in the process.

**Figure 9.** Difficulties respondents noted in submitting reports



Some comments about what makes it difficult for people to make a report include the following:

- Limited time or no time (45.8%) This may suggest that mandated reporters feel rushed in making the decision to report and may be overreporting to “play it safe”.



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- Feeling unsure if asking questions for context is construed as “investigating” (29.2%) This suggests that many teachers probably would like to know more prior to reporting but are wary of pursuing an inquiry due to the cautions they are given in training.
- Forms are difficult to understand (22.9%)
- Not a clear understanding of when to complete a report (16.7%)

Based on this survey, our overall recommendation to the State Taskforce is that Mandated Reporter training should be standardized and made consistent across all categories of occupation. Additional modules should continue to be included for areas of specialization -- for example, medical providers who are looking for specific signs that would not be included in a teacher training, and social workers who might be required to have additional legal obligations. But there should be a basic core curriculum that everyone is exposed to when trainings are required.

It is also our recommendation that more case studies be presented which force trainees to examine various nuances in the situations mandated reporters face in their workplaces.

We strongly recommend that trainee self-awareness of bias (implicit or explicit) be thoroughly examined and that training modules should include attention to the specific elements of cultural or ethnic practices or sensibilities present in the communities they serve.

It would be fruitful to include feedback from parents who have been investigated and cleared of allegations in developing these trainings.

CAPCC is committed to the protection of children and prevention of child abuse and neglect. To that aim, we recommend that child abuse and neglect allegations be more thoughtfully considered to avoid bringing unintended harm to families in our community who are doing their best in difficult circumstances. Our hope is that more parents be directed to community support agencies rather than reported to Child Welfare.

Please direct questions about this report to [JanBramlett@outlook.com](mailto:JanBramlett@outlook.com)