

Protection against abuse, including sexual abuse, of minors in The Bahamas

The Children and Family Services Unit of the Department of Social Services is the primary section with direct intervention in child maltreatment matters inclusive of sexual abuse. All cases are investigated by this area once the matter comes to its attention. Initially the caseworker interviews the child. The non-abusing parent is interviewed. If there is a no danger to the child he/she remains in the home. The matter is reported to the Police. The child may be taken to the Hospital. The situation continues to be monitored until the child is no longer at risk. The objective is to ensure that matters relative to the maltreatment of children, are properly coordinated to ensure the well being of children /inclusive of matters relative to sexual abuse.

- **Legislation**

The Bahamas has enacted legislation that specifically addresses general and sexual abuse. The Sexual Offences Act Chapter 99 for example creates a number of sexual offences such as:

I. Rape

II. Sexual Intercourse with a person under fourteen years

III. Sexual intercourse with a person between fourteen

IV. Sexual intercourse with a person suffering from a mental disorder

V. Incest

VI. Sexual intercourse with a Dependant

Section 28 of this Act also provides for mandatory reporting of suspected abuse of minors. The Child Protection Act, No. 1 of 2007 also makes provision for mandatory reporting of Child abuse. Additionally, this Act it places a statutory duty on individuals such as physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, psychologist, other health care professionals, school principals teachers counselors social workers, members of the clergy and police officers to report cases of child abuse to the Director of Social Services.

The Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act, No. 24 of 2007 gives the Magistrates Court jurisdiction to grant protection orders circumstances in circumstances of domestic violence. Under this Act domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional psychological or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, partner child, any other person who is a member of the household or dependant