

Law change: more people obliged to report child abuse



▲ Up to 50,000 children who suffer abuse are registered by the child protection authorities in Switzerland a year (symbolic image) keystone

All professionals with regular contact with children will be obliged to report their suspicions of child abuse to the authorities from January 1, 2019, in a tightening of the child protection law.

June 27, 2018

🕒 2 minutes

The Federal Council, Switzerland's governing body, fixed the date for the change on Wednesday. The move had been approved by parliament in December.

It is aimed at offering better protection to small children as well as harmonising the rules nationwide. Cantons are free to have other measures – some already go further than the change and will not have to go back to a less strict approach.

Currently only those with an official function, such as teachers and social workers, are obliged to notify the authorities in cases of suspected abuse. The new rules see this duty applied to anyone who is in regular contact with a child, such as day-care staff, music teachers or sports coaches.

This should increase the protection of small children in particular, who do not have regular contact with teachers or social workers. The key issue is that there are “concrete indications” that a child's physical, mental or sexual integrity is in danger, a justice ministry statement said.

Confidentiality

Another significant change concerns doctors, lawyers and psychologists. Until now, these professionals have been exempt from the obligation to report due to doctor-patient or lawyer-client confidentiality issues.

Under the new guidelines, they will be able to contact the protection agency despite their professional confidentiality, if it is in the interest of the child. Currently they can only make a report if an offence has been committed.

Earlier this month, a study found that up to 50,000 children who suffer abuse are registered by the child protection authorities in Switzerland each year.



In compliance with the JTI standards

More: [SWI swissinfo.ch](http://SWI.swissinfo.ch) certified by the Journalism Trust Initiative