Protecting Children is Everyone’s Job.
House Bill 1355 by Representative Chris Dorworth and its companion bill, Senate Bill 1816 by Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto were filed during the state legislative session following the child sexual abuse scandal that rocked Pennsylvania State University. PSU officials and administrators were made aware of serious and on-going sexual abuse of children perpetrated by one of the assistant coaches, spanning years and failed to report the suspected child abuse, thus allowing it to continue against many victims. As a result, as of October 2012, Florida law includes a provision that requires college administrators to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect committed on College property or at College events or functions. The law now mandates a $1,000,000 fine for each failure to report, applying to both institutional administrators and the institution’s law enforcement agency.

What Does This Law Mean To You?
College personnel must notify the Florida Department of Children and Families when there is credible evidence that a minor:
- Is being abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or another person responsible for minor;
- Is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision;
- Is being abused by an adult other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or another person responsible for the minor’s welfare;
- Is the victim of childhood sexual abuse or the victim of a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender.

At Eastern Florida State College we have daily contact with children who are dually enrolled as students in college courses, who are participating in college activities, and who are otherwise present on our campuses at college activities. This law requires that we all have a heightened awareness for the welfare of these children. (See Procedures 806.11 and 800.13)

Frequently Asked Questions.
Q: What is child abuse, abandonment, or neglect?
A: "Abuse" means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. This includes both affirmative acts and omissions to act.

"Abandoned" or "abandonment" means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, makes no provision for the child’s support and has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child.

"Neglect" occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child’s physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

Q: What is the legal definition of a "child"?
A: A child is a person under the age of 18 years of age who has not been emancipated by court order.

Q: For Florida colleges, does the new law just impose a reporting requirement on college administrators?
A: Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible for the child’s welfare as defined in this chapter, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department in the manner prescribed in subsection (2) per FS 39.201(1)(a).