

an emergency department, practitioner's office, home, daycare center, or school.

### **Nursing Alert**

The priority is to remove the child from the abusive situation to prevent further injury.

All states and provinces in North America have laws for mandatory reporting of child maltreatment. Suspected child abuse is reported to the local authorities.\* Referrals usually come to the state child welfare department and are assigned to a caseworker in an agency, such as Child Protective Services. After a referral has been made, a caseworker is assigned to investigate the report. Based on the findings, the child is left in the home or temporarily removed.

A court proceeding may be necessary before the child can be placed outside the home or when parental rights are to be terminated. When the courts are involved, they usually require firsthand testimony by the referring parties. Nurses may be subpoenaed to appear in court, or their notes may be introduced as evidence in court hearings. Accurate and factual documentation is essential. Behaviors are described, not interpreted, and are recorded daily to establish a progress record (see [Nursing Care Guidelines](#) box). Conversations among the nurse, child, and parent are recorded verbatim as much as possible.

### **Nursing Care Guidelines**

#### **Recording Assessment Data in Suspected Abuse**

##### **History of Injury**

Date, time, and place of occurrence

Sequence of events with recorded times

Presence of witnesses, especially person caring for child at time of incident