

# **Ethical Decision Making in Child Maltreatment Reporting: Exploring Best Practices for Professionals**

*(four-hour version)*

## **Program Description**

In North Carolina, “Any person or institution who has cause to suspect” is considered a mandated reporter of child abuse, neglect, and dependency. Professionals working with children and families are often faced with the uniquely challenging role of serving as a support to families while also navigating complex decision making around reporting possible harms. Issues of trust and maintaining the therapeutic relationship must be factored into decisions to access the ethically and legally approved breaks with confidentiality. The child welfare and law enforcement systems that respond to these reports can be confusing to navigate, at best, especially when the professional is not familiar with the frames of reference and sometimes competing priorities and conflicting values of these systems.

In order to support children and families and address immediate safety issues, it is important that professionals understand aspects of the child welfare system and the legal system with regard to reporting and the costs and benefits of involving each of those systems. This session will examine the NC Juvenile Code, demonstrate the flow of response once a report is made to the Department of Social Services, explore the ethical tensions inherent in reporting, and present best practice guidelines on decision making and communication with families. Participants will have the opportunity to work together on case studies and engage in discussion with colleagues over challenges in child maltreatment reporting.

## **Program Objectives:**

Upon completion of this program participants will:

1. Describe the nuances of NC General Statutes which apply to mandated and non-mandated reporting of child maltreatment.
2. Explain the convergence of laws and various ethical codes for maltreatment reporting.
3. Evaluate strategies for managing the many ethical and practice challenges that mandated reporting presents to human service professionals.
4. Identify best practices for reporting maltreatment and navigating communication with client families.
5. Apply the material learned to case vignettes.

## **Agenda**

9:00 AM	Introductions; opening ethics discussion activity
9:20	Review of agenda, context, and objectives for training
9:30	Child maltreatment reporting laws and statutes: Video and discussion
10:00	Nuts and bolts of NC Child Protective Services interventions

10:30	BREAK
10:45	Ethical codes and maltreatment reporting
11:15	Ethical challenges to maltreatment reporting
11:45	Best practices for reporting maltreatment
12:15	Case vignettes and group discussion activity
1:00	Wrap-up, resources, and closing discussion.
1:15 PM	Adjourn

**Target Audience**

Mental health, substance use and health and human service professionals.

**Contact Hours**

4.0 contact hours

**Faculty**

**Amy Levine, MSW, LCSW** is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, where she teaches practice courses in the MSW curriculum and serves in the field education program. Amy has a practice background in both public and private child welfare services as well as mental health treatment. She has worked as a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor. Amy's practice and research interests include trauma-informed models of care, child and adolescent mental health, the intersection of child welfare and behavioral health services, and professional resilience and well-being.