

### Topic 4.3: Breaking confidentiality: Mandatory reporting

We talked about always keeping everything private and confidential in research. But there are exceptions for this rule. Let's talk about when we can't keep things private and confidential.



We talked about keeping all information participants share private and confidential. But, sometimes you can't keep all this information private and confidential. For example, if someone is being hurt or abused, you have to tell someone.



Sharing information that will keep someone safe is a way to take care of people. **Mandatory reporting** is when you share information about someone being hurt or abused, or if they are hurting or abusing someone else.

States have their own laws about mandatory reporting—your project leader will talk more about this law where you are doing your research project.

If it seems possible that mandatory reporting may come up in your project, it is important to tell people that you may not be able to keep everything they share private and confidential at the beginning of the study.

By telling people about this right away, they can make their own decision about being in the study and what they share during research. Information about mandatory reporting can be included in the consent meeting and participants can be reminded during the study.

If someone starts to share something you might need to report, you can interrupt them to remind them that you might have to break confidentiality.

If research participants do or say something that makes you worried, or you see something that makes you worried, you should let your project leader know right away. The project leader will work with you to figure out what to do next to keep the research participant safe.

It can be hard when you have to break confidentiality. The person really trusted you with their information and may be upset that you shared it. Or, the information they shared might lead to changes in their lives. You may never know what happens to the participant but remember, you are sharing this information because you care about the research participants.