

## **MANDATED REPORTERS: WHEN MUST YOU REPORT CONSENSUAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY INVOLVING MINORS?**

The question of whether the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) (Penal Code §§ 11165 - 11174) requires designated professionals to report consensual sexual activity involving minors remains a “hopelessly blurred” area of the law. On the one hand, *Planned Parenthood v. Van de Kamp* (1986) 181 Cal.App.3d 245 holds that laws which require the reporting of voluntary, nonabusive sexual behavior between minors of a similar age violate a minor’s right to sexual privacy. On the other hand, *People v. Stockton Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic, Inc.* (1988) 203 Cal.App.3d 225, as well as legislative changes in 1997, affirm that certain types of sexual conduct involving minors still must be reported even if consensual. (See AB 327, Stats. 1997, c. 83.) The following guidelines are designed to synthesize conflicting legal authority and provide mandated reporters with reasonable guidance.

- ☞ **Both children are under age 14? No report is required** unless there is disparate age, intimidation, coercion, exploitation or bribery.
- ☞ **One child is under age 14, the other child is age 14 - 17? Yes, a report is required.** Penal Code sections 11165.1(a) and 288(a) afford special protection to children under age 14.
- ☞ **Both children are ages 14 - 17? No report is required,** unless the sexual activity involves incest (see Penal Code § 285, Family Code 2200) or there is evidence of abuse or an exploitative relationship.
- ☞ **The child is age 14 - 17, the other person 18 or older? No report is required,** unless the sexual activity involves one of the following: **1.** Incest (see Penal Code § 285, Family Code 2200); **2.** Unlawful Sexual Intercourse (also known as “Statutory Rape”) involving a person over age 21 with a child age 14 or 15 (see Penal Code § 261.5(d)); and **3.** Lewd and Lascivious Acts involving a child age 14 or 15 and a person who is at least ten years older than the child (see Penal Code § 288(c)(1)).

While consensual sexual intercourse between a child (a person under age 18) and an adult (a person age 18 or older) is still a crime and thus subject to prosecution, California law only requires that it be reported if the child is under age 16 and the adult is over age 21. (See Penal Code § 261.5(a).)

**Note:** Sodomy (Penal Code § 286); Oral Copulation (Penal Code § 288a) and Penetration by Foreign Object (Penal Code § 289) (which includes a penetration by a finger) are still listed as reportable offenses under Penal Code § 11165.1, but recent cases such as *People v. Hofsheier* (2006) 37 Cal. 4th 1185 and *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) 539 U.S. 558 cast doubt on the constitutionality of treating these types of consensual sexual activity different from sexual intercourse.