

# WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Abuse is defined as 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. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to 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.

### SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The warning signs of child abuse and neglect vary from child to child. Children have different ways of coping with abuse, and the signs often depend on each child's characteristics and environment. Parents, guardians, teachers, professionals, and bystanders all have the responsibility to keep children safe. One way to do that is by observing the behaviors and interactions of children at home, at school, and with their friends. Please keep in mind the following warning signs and possible indicators of abuse in order to help keep children safe. In reviewing the signs of abuse, it is important to also keep in mind that signs are not limited to one type of child abuse or neglect, and sometimes, different types of abuse and/or neglect occur in combination. It is important to remember the presence of these indicators does not prove abuse is occurring, but rather MIGHT indicate abuse is occurring.

	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators	
Physical Abuse	<ul> <li>→ Multiple and/or unexplained bruises in different stages of healing</li> <li>→ Welts, human bite marks, bald spots</li> <li>→ Burns that cannot be explained</li> <li>→ Unexplained fractures or other injuries</li> <li>→ Untreated injuries &amp; medical needs</li> <li>→ Wears clothes not suited to the weather</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>⇒ Nervous, withdrawn, clingy, and/or tries to please caregiver</li> <li>⇒ Hostile, aggressive, violent, and/or self-destructive behaviors</li> <li>⇒ Complaints of soreness/injuries</li> <li>⇒ Explanation of injuries does not make sense</li> <li>⇒ Fearful of parent, going home, or adult contact</li> <li>⇒ Shows little or no emotion when hurt</li> <li>⇒ Excessive absences</li> </ul>	
Sexual Abuse	<ul> <li>⇒ Torn, stained or bloody undergarments</li> <li>⇒ Genital pain, swelling or itching</li> <li>⇒ Difficulty walking or sitting</li> <li>⇒ Bruises or bleeding in genital or anal area</li> <li>⇒ Sexually transmitted diseases</li> <li>⇒ Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections</li> <li>⇒ Pain when urinating or passing stool</li> <li>⇒ Unexplained abdominal pain</li> <li>⇒ Vaginal or penile discharge</li> <li>⇒ *Physical indicators present less than 10%</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>⇒ Withdrawn, depressed, and/or threatened by physical contact</li> <li>⇒ Premature knowledge of sex</li> <li>⇒ Seductive behavior</li> <li>⇒ Sexual acting out, excessive masturbation</li> <li>⇒ Low self-esteem, lack of confidence</li> <li>⇒ Sudden changes in weight</li> <li>⇒ Change or decrease in school performance</li> <li>⇒ Uncontrolled emotions, secrecy about feelings</li> <li>⇒ Anxiety, sleep difficulties, nightmares, and/or other fears</li> <li>⇒ Regressed behaviors (speech, bedwetting)</li> <li>⇒ Adolescent: self-mutilation, eating disorders, promiscuity</li> </ul>	
Emotional Abuse	<ul> <li>⇒ Delayed physical or cognitive development</li> <li>⇒ Speech problems</li> <li>⇒ Habit disorders (sucking, rocking, biting)</li> <li>⇒ Eating disorders, ulcers</li> <li>⇒ Sleep disorders</li> <li>⇒ Hair loss</li> <li>⇒ Failure to thrive in infants</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>⇒ Demanding, needy, attention-seeking or overly compliant</li> <li>⇒ Extreme temper tantrums, oppositional and/or destructive</li> <li>⇒ Delinquent or criminal activity</li> <li>⇒ Unfriendly, distant, poor peer-relations</li> <li>⇒ Low self esteem, depressed, suicidal</li> <li>⇒ Anxiety disorders</li> </ul>	
Neglect	<ul> <li>⇒ Abandonment by parent/guardian</li> <li>⇒ Lack of adult supervision</li> <li>⇒ Untreated lice, other medical or dental needs</li> <li>⇒ Poor hygiene – constantly dirty</li> <li>⇒ Constantly hungry, underweight</li> <li>⇒ Failure to thrive in infants</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>⇒ Constantly tired, sleep disorders</li> <li>⇒ Steals or begs for food</li> <li>⇒ Excessive absenteeism/tardiness</li> <li>⇒ Extremely needy, rejected, isolated</li> <li>⇒ Poor social and/or communication skills</li> <li>⇒ Conduct disorders</li> <li>⇒ Delayed growth or motor development, learning disabilities</li> </ul>	

Every child deserves to be safe!





# **RISK FACTORS FOR ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Being aware of potential risk factors can help with both the identification and prevention of abuse.

### DISCLOSURE AND REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Every citizen, whether a mandatory reporter or not, should report suspected abuse. If you suspect any child is being abused, please call the Hotline for your state or area. You DO NOT NEED PROOF that a child has been abused or neglected to make a report, only reasonable suspicion. The authorities will determine if abuse or neglect is occurring. For a list of state reporting hotlines visit:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspROL&rolType=custom &rs\_id=5

#### If a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect

Do	Don't
$\Rightarrow$ Recognize that hints may be the start of a disclosure (children often	$\Rightarrow$ Show shock or disgust
test you before disclosing abuse)	$\Rightarrow$ Make promises (ex. "I won't tell" or "the
$\Rightarrow$ Use open-ended, reflective questions – who, what, where, when, how	abuse will stop now")
$\Rightarrow$ Tell the child you believe them	$\Rightarrow$ <u>Ask WHY</u>
⇒ Remain calm and supportive	$\Rightarrow$ Be critical or judgmental of the offender
$\Rightarrow$ Listen and allow the child to tell you what happened in their own	(Children are protective of people they
words	care about, even if they are abusive)
$\Rightarrow$ Tell the child that you are glad they told you	$\Rightarrow$ Try and "rescue" or "cure" the family on
$\Rightarrow$ Tell the child "It was not your fault"	your own, especially in lieu of reporting
$\Rightarrow$ Use the child's vocabulary when addressing them and when reporting	$\Rightarrow$ Rely on any other person or agency to
⇒ Document direct quotes	report

# If You Witness Child Abuse or Neglect

Do	Don't
⇒ Remain calm and supportive	$\Rightarrow$ Show shock or disgust
$\Rightarrow$ Try to distract the child	$\Rightarrow$ Stare at the parent or give dirty looks
$\Rightarrow$ Empathize with the parent and/or offer help	$\Rightarrow$ Belittle the parent
$\Rightarrow$ Notify the store manager if you are in public	$\Rightarrow$ Assume it's "none of your business"
$\Rightarrow$ Make a report to DCF if you have a license plate number or any other	$\Rightarrow$ Rely on someone else to intervene
information	⇒ Intervene in a hostile situation which may
$\Rightarrow$ Call 911 & report the child's location if they are in immediate danger	be dangerous to you

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