

# SIGNS

## of child abuse

Below are indicators of child abuse that can include but are not limited to these signs. Some signs that a child is experiencing violence or abuse are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the authorities. You do not need proof.

- 1 **Unexplained injuries.** Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.
- 2 **Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- 3 **Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
- 4 **Fear of going home.** Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.
- 5 **Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
- 6 **Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent night mares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
- 7 **Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the children's injuries from authorities.
- 8 **Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
- 9 **Risk-taking behaviors.** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
- 10 **Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

WWW.ONEWITHCOURAGE.ORG

### If a child outcries:

#### DO:

- Remain calm.
- Believe the child.
- Allow the child to talk.
- Show interest and concern.
- Reassure and support the child.
- Take action. It could save a child's life.

#### DON'T:

- Panic or overreact.
- Press the child to talk.
- Promise anything you can't control.
- Confront the offender.
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings.
- Overwhelm the child with questions.

Remember, you are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse.

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, call 911. In Indiana, call the abuse and neglect hotline at 800.800.5556. Outside of Indiana, visit [www.onewithcourage.org](http://www.onewithcourage.org) for a list of resources.

One with Courage is Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc.'s state-wide initiative centered around the courage it takes to talk about child sexual abuse. Comfort House & Southwestern Indiana Child Advocacy Centers, share a common goal - to change the way Indiana responds to child abuse. You can help - learn the signs, share this information, and be the One with Courage to make a difference.



MRCAC  
Midwest Regional  
Children's Advocacy Center

