



WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE? HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS?

THERE ARE FOUR COMMONLY RECOGNIZED CATEGORIES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

NEGLECT

SEXUAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Children will react to stress, trauma and abuse uniquely. Some children will exhibit obvious changes in behaviors, others may not. Common indications that abuse may be occurring are listed below. They are not specific to abuse and can occur for other reasons.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse can happen along with other types of abuse. This may include:

- humiliating the child, blaming or belittling them;
- refusing to comfort the child when upset ;
- calling the child names like stupid, bad, useless;
- setting unrealistic expectations;
- threatening or accusing the child of things;
- exposing the child to violence or chronic substance use in the home;
- cruel or unusual treatment or punishment.

A child or youth that has experienced emotional abuse may:

- constantly apologize or try to please;
- appear anxious, fearful, or depressed;
- have trouble focusing, learning or sleeping;
- behave aggressively or angrily;
- cry for no apparent reason;
- have problems with bed-wetting.

NEGLECT

Neglect is when a child or youth is not provided with basic age-appropriate care such as:

- food;
- clothing;
- shelter;
- love and affection;
- protection from harm.

A child or youth that has experienced neglect may:

- often complain of being hungry or steal and/or hoard food;
- be underweight or dehydrated;
- have poor hygiene;
- wear clothes that are torn, dirty, and/or do not fit;
- engage in adult tasks such as caring for siblings, completing household chores, or looking after a parent;
- have ongoing medical or dental problems such as infected sores, decayed teeth or poor vision.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse happens when a child or youth is exposed to inappropriate sexual contact, activity or behavior.

This may include:

Non-touching activities such as:

- inappropriate sexual phone calls or conversations with a child;
- having a child watch someone expose themselves;
- showing child pornographic material.

Sexual touching activities such as:

- fondling a child;
- making the child touch an adult's or other child's genital area;
- sexual intercourse with the child or youth.

Sexual exploitation activities such as:

- engaging a child or youth for prostitution;
- using a child in pornography;
- luring a child via the Internet for sexual purposes;
- involving a child in sexual activity in exchange for money, food, shelter, clothes, electronics or other items of value to the child or youth;
- making, selling or distributing child pornography.

A child or youth that has experienced sexual abuse may:

- know more about sex than others their age;
- behave in an aggressively sexual way;
- use sexual language or make drawings with sexual images;
- become withdrawn, anxious, fearful or depressed;
- have physical trauma or pain in the anal and genital areas;
- show regression in their behavior which can include; wetting or soiling their pants or bed, thumb-sucking;
- display changing sleeping patterns like being afraid to sleep, having nightmares or sleeping longer than usual.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is when someone causes an injury or trauma to any part of a child's body. Physical abuse can happen once or many times. This may include:

- hitting;
- strangulation;
- kicking;
- biting;
- scratching;
- pulling hair;
- throwing or hitting child with things.

A child or youth that has experienced physical abuse may have visible injuries that are unexplained or poorly explained, including:

- bruises, cuts, scrapes, welts, fractures, sprains, dislocations or head injuries;
- injuries impossible by an accident;
- visible handprints, fingerprints or other marks;
- burns on various parts of their body;
- unusual behavior or appearance.

In addition, the child or youth may:

- be defensive about injuries;
- wear clothing that covers their body year round;
- be unable to tolerate physical contact or touch;
- fear parents, guardians or other adults;
- run away;
- be reluctant to undress around others;
- say their parent or guardian has injured them.

**IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY. PLEASE CALL 911,
OR REPORT IT TO THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AT 1-800-663-9122**

