

# Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

*Presented by:*  
Early Care and Education  
Training and Consulting

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# Types of Abuse

*The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.*

*It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.*

# Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

# Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect with the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

# Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by the parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

# Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overly rejects the child

# RECAP

## Common Indicators of Possible Child Abuse

### Child

- Bruises or wounds in various stages of healing
- Injuries on two or more planes(sides) of the body
- Injuries reported to be caused by falling but which do not include hands, knees, or forehead
- Oval, immersion (in hot liquid), doughnut-shaped, or imprint (hot iron or cigarette) burns
- Reluctance to leave school, comes in early, stays late
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Discomfort when sitting
- Sophisticated sexual knowledge or play
- Radical behavior changes or regressive behavior
- Child withdraws or watches adults
- Child seems to expect abuse
- Revealing discussion, stories, or drawings
- Sudden changes in school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to parents attention

# RECAP

## Common Indicators of Possible Child Abuse

### Adult

- Unrealistic expectations for child
- Reliance on child to meet (adult) social or emotional needs
- Lack of basic childrearing knowledge and skills
- Substance abuse
- Shows little concern for the child
- Denies the existence, or blames the child, for problems in school
- Asks the teacher to use harsh discipline when child misbehaves at school
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless or a burden
- Child and the parent rarely make eye contact with each other