

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

What is child abuse?

Any mistreatment of a child that results in harm and that has no “reasonable” explanation. It is generally divided into several categories including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

Physical Abuse-

DEFINITION: Physical injury inflicted on a child that is not an accident.

Warning Signs:

- Bruises, welts, broken bones
- Burns
- Complaints of soreness or stiffness
- Awkward movements that appear to be caused by pain
- Bruises or marks that are in the shape of an object

Neglect-

DEFINITION: The failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for the basic needs of a child to the point that it seriously endangers a child's physical health.

Warning Signs:

- Soiled clothing or inadequate clothing for the weather
- Hoarding or stealing food / poor nutrition
- Listlessness or fatigue
- Untreated medical problems
- Poor hygiene (odor of urine or feces, very bad breath, dirty or decaying teeth)
- Poor relationships
- Withdrawal from others
- Craving attention
- Low self esteem

Sexual Abuse-

DEFINITION: Inappropriate sexual behavior with a child and includes any inappropriate sexual touching.

Warning Signs:

- Unusual knowledge about sex
- Sexual play with peers that goes beyond curiosity
- Extreme Secrecy, compliance, or withdrawal
- An unusual fear of people from one gender or with specific characteristics
- Very seductive behavior

Emotional Damage-

DEFINITION: Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning for which the parent or guardian has neglected, refused, or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or take steps to ameliorate the symptoms.

Emotional Damage is evidenced by one or more of the following characteristics exhibited to a **SEVERE DEGREE:**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Withdrawal
- Outward Aggressive Behavior
- Substantial and observable change in behavior
- Emotional response or cognition that is not within the normal range of the child's age and stage of development