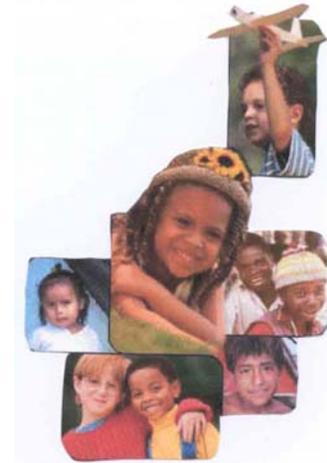


# Child Abuse Prevention



**A Child is Helpless...  
You Are Not.**

**An Information Guide  
provided by  
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- Reluctant to go home (coming to school early or staying late, for example).
- Very passive and withdrawn – or aggressive and disruptive.
- Tired a lot, or they may complain of nightmares or not sleeping well.
- Fearful and anxious.
- Abused children may also show sudden changes in behavior or school performance.

## KNOW THE SIGNS OF AN ABUSIVE ADULT

Consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caretaker:

- Seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home.
- Denies problems at school or at home – or blames the child for them.
- Sees the child as worthless or as a burden.
- Avoids discussing the child's injuries, or gives conflicting explanations for them.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- Seems isolated from other parents and school, and community activities.
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it.
- Seems indifferent to the child.
- Seems secretive or tries to isolate the child from other children.
- Frequently blames, belittles or insults the child.

These signs don't prove that an adult is an abuser, but they could be a signal that the adult and his or her family need help.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP CHILD ABUSE

The following "**R's**" are recommended:

**Reach out** and support parents and kids. Anything you can do, from baby-sitting to running errands, can help reduce the stress that often leads to abuse.

**Raise the issue** by educating yourself and others in your community.

**Remember the risk factors**, such as economic hardship, isolation or substance abuse problems.

**Recognize the warning signs in children**, which may include nervousness around adults, aggression or low self-esteem.

**Report suspected abuse or neglect.** Children die every day from injuries caused by child abuse. Often, someone was aware of the abuse, but didn't report it. Abusive families need help. Reporting abuse can help connect families with counseling and services. This may help relieve a family's stress – and prevent future abuse.

*The cycle of abuse can be stopped. Victims of abuse who receive counseling and treatment are less likely to become abusers or have other problems as they grow up.*

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE

If it is an emergency, call the Suffolk Police Department – 911. They can ensure the immediate safety of a child and get medical attention if needed. Call Child Protective Services at 514-7458, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours, call the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800/552-7096. Remember, suspicion of abuse is all that is necessary to file a report. Your information can be given anonymously. You will be asked to describe your concerns about the child and it will be helpful if you can provide: the child's name, age, address, gender, school attended (if possible), and names of parents.



### **A Message from Your Commonwealth's Attorney**

*Everyone knows that as adults, we have the capacity to affect the lives of children in so many, positive ways.*

*Kids look to us for love, security, support and other vital things. Whether we are parents, guardians, grandparents, neighbors, educators, or just caring adults, we have the opportunity to touch the lives of children and teens in meaningful, significant and lasting ways. Children are our future. Let's all help make children's lives safer, healthier and happier.*

## WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?



Child abuse is any mistreatment or neglect of a child less than eighteen years of age that results in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot be reasonably explained. Child abuse can include: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

## SOME FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

- In 2001, Child Protective Service (CPS) agencies investigated more than 3.25 million reports of child abuse and neglect throughout the United States. This is an increase of 2% from the previous year. Teachers, law enforcement officers, social service workers and physicians made 56% of the reports.
- Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment. CPS investigations determined that 63% of victims in 2001 suffered neglect; 19% - physical abuse, 10% - sexual abuse, and 8% - emotional maltreatment.
- Based on data reported by CPS agencies in 2001, it is estimated that nationwide, 2,000 children died as a result of abuse or neglect. Based on this number, *5 to 6 children die each day* as a result of child abuse or neglect. Of these fatalities, 85% were children younger than 6-years of age, and 44% were under the age of 1.
- Most often, the abuser is someone the child knows, such as a parent, neighbor or relative.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

The most visible form of child abuse, physical abuse is defined as any act which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury and accounts for 19% of all substantiated cases of child abuse. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonable, severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable punishment. This usually happens when a frustrated or angry

parent strikes, shakes or throws a child. Physical abuse injuries result from punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. While any of these injuries can occur accidentally when a child is at play, physical abuse should be suspected if the explanations do not fit the injury or if a pattern of frequency is apparent. The longer the abuse continues, the more serious the injuries to the child and the more difficult it is to eliminate the abusive behavior.

## EMOTIONAL ABUSE



Accounting for 8% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, emotional abuse is commonly defined as the systematic tearing down of another human being. It is considered a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with a child's positive development. Emotional abuse is probably the least understood of all child abuse, yet it is the most prevalent, and can be the cruelest and most destructive of all types of abuse. Emotional abuse may involve criticizing, belittling, humiliating, insulting, rejecting or withholding love from a child. Emotional abuse can cause serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders. Exposure to domestic violence is another form of emotional abuse.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse occurs when there is any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law which is committed or allowed to be committed by the child's parents or other persons responsible for the care of the child. Sexual abuse includes rape, touching/fondling or involving a child in pornography.

## NEGLECT

Neglect occurs when there is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, education, medical attention or supervision, to the extent that the child's health or safety is endangered. This also includes abandonment and situations where the parent or caretaker's own incapacitating behavior or absence prevents or severely limits the performing of child caring tasks. Categories of neglect include emotional, abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food, and malnutrition.

**Educational neglect** includes the allowance of chronic truancy, failure to enroll a child of mandatory school age in school, and failure to attend to a special educational need.

**Physical neglect** includes a refusal of or delay in seeking health care, abandonment, expulsion from the home or refusal to allow a runaway to return home, and inadequate supervision.

**Emotional neglect** includes such actions as marked inattention to a child's needs for affection, refusal of or failure to provide needed psychological care, spouse abuse in the child's presence, and permission of drug or alcohol use by the child.

*Leaving a young child home alone or failing to provide needed medical care may be considered neglect.*



## KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs. Abused children may seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults.