Childhelp | PREVENTION EDUCATION

IDENTIFYING ABUSE & NEGLECT

Child abuse and neglect are adverse childhood experiences that impact millions of children every year in the U.S. It can happen to any child, in any family, in any community. Every adult should be able to recognize indicators and know how to make a report.

INDICATORS

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries
- Frequent bruises or burns
- Injuries in different stages of healing
- Wearing clothing inappropriate for weather

Emotional Abuse

- Sudden mood changes
- Anxiety or depression
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Low self-esteem

#1 INDICATOR:

Sudden and unexplained change in behavior such as poor grades, depression, aggression, or isolation from family or friends

Sexual Abuse

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Nightmares or fearfulness
- Avoidance of certain people or places
- Disruptive, impulsive, or depressed behavior

Neglect

- Frequent tiredness
- Poor hygiene
- Malnourishment/hunger
- Untreated injuries or illness
- Lack of appropriate supervision

Key Points

- Children often do not tell when they are being harmed, especially if it is by someone they love or trust so it's important to be aware of indicators.
- Remember, anyone can abuse a child, even people we know and trust.
- Trust your instincts and take concerns seriously.
- One sign alone may not mean a child is being abused. Look for patterns of concerning signs.
- If you suspect abuse, make a report to your local child welfare or law enforcement agency. It is best to let professionals determine if a child is being harmed.

In all states, professionals who work with children are Mandatory Reporters. In some states, EVERY ADULT is a Mandatory Reporter. Regardless, if you have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or neglected, you should report it to your state's child welfare agency. You do not have to have proof abuse is occurring.

Need Help?
Visit childhelp.org/resource-library for more information or to find your local reporting contact information. The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is available 24/7 to provide support and resources. Call, text, or chat: 1-800-422-4453 or visit ChildhelpHotline.org.

Preventing **ABUSE BY** *building* **CONNECTED, PROTECTIVE COMMUNITIES**

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