

Child Abuse FAQs

1. What is child abuse?

Child abuse is any willful or threatened act which results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause a child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child may be caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parent or caretaker. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

2. What is neglect?

Neglect occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment or when a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. The foregoing circumstances shall not be considered neglect if caused primarily by financial inability unless actual services for relief have been offered to and rejected by the child's parent or caregiver.

3. What is abandonment?

Abandonment is a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, makes no provision for the child's support, makes no effort to communicate with the child and has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child. The incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare may support a finding of abandonment.

4. What type of prevention program is Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe?

Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe is a primary prevention program. Primary prevention programs are delivered to large communities or groups with the intention of preventing and reducing the risk of a particular threat.

In regard to Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe, the threat is child abuse, and the intent is to prevent abuse before it occurs. Each grade level curriculum is developmentally tailored with attention to the uniqueness of learning styles. The curriculum incorporates active behavior skills learning, modeling, checking for understanding that goes beyond recall, and has built in opportunities for guided practice with positive reinforcement of new learning. A consistent program presence is provided through classroom and school materials that remain visible after the program sessions are complete. The program focuses on enhancing the child's overall sense of confidence with regard to safety, and promotes respect for self and peers that can be applied to general situations as well as potentially harmful situations. Principles of learning from social psychology are infused in the curriculum design and delivery to promote desired behavioral responses as well as knowledge gain.

5. What is the approach for Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe?

Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe uses an ecological approach to prevention education in that the program provides materials to engage parents and caregivers, teachers and school administrators, and community stakeholders. In addition to increasing knowledge of abusive behaviors and resistance skill building, there is a focus on creating a responsive safety network with peers, teachers, parents/caregivers, and other adults that the child identifies as safe. Children are provided with take-away items that are used to engage their parents or caregivers and to reinforce important concepts including the five Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe safety rules. Knowledge building information and reinforcing activities are available to parents and teachers through the virtual campus at www.speakupbesafe.org. The program also promotes the development of working alliances with the broader community including law enforcement, child welfare, and child advocacy groups.

Auxiliary information encourages community capacity building around the issue of child abuse prevention. Delivery is enhanced through practical guidance for facilitators and encouragement to participate in online training and communities of practice. Sensitivity and best practices in handling children's disclosures of abuse are also addressed for facilitators, parents, and teachers. Clear evaluation standards are incorporated into the program design to provide further reinforcement of the program goals, a formal mechanism of feedback to inform program revisions and additions, and to build the evidence base of the program.

6. What are the most common types of maltreatment?

In the US Department of Health Services, 2009 Maltreatment Report, the majority (78.3%) of victims suffered from neglect. Additionally, 17.8% of victims suffered from physical abuse, 9.5% suffered from sexual abuse, 7.6% suffered from emotional maltreatment and 2.4% experienced medical neglect. Finally, 9.6% percent of victims experienced such other types of maltreatment as “abandonment,” “threats of harm to the child,” or “congenital drug addiction.”

7. Who is considered a mandatory reporter?

Mandated reporters include any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected. In many states, the list of mandated reporters includes school teachers and other school officials or personnel.

8. How do I make a report?

Every state has requirements about reporting child abuse and neglect including what must be reported, who is required to report, how the reports are made, and the penalties for not reporting. These requirements vary by state, so it is important to know what the requirements are in the state where you live and work.

www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/index.cfm

9. What information do I need to complete the report?

While the required information for reporting child abuse or neglect may vary by state, reporters typically need to provide who was involved in the incident, where it occurred and the circumstances surrounding the event. It is important to provide the child’s exact responses. Reporters also need to provide as much information as possible on the child and others involved in the incident including name, age, race, gender, address, phone number, information regarding disabilities and/or limitations, the extent of any injuries sustained, directions to the victim and any possible risk to investigators. Mandatory reporters are required to provide their name, which will be kept confidential.

10. What are the most common behaviors that may indicate maltreatment?

Some of the most common indicators of maltreatment for younger children include having issues following the rules, being disrespectful, having constant issues staying in their seat and on task or paying attention, temper tantrums, and difficult peer relationships. Some of the most common indicators of maltreatment or abuse for older children are stealing, truancy, sexual risk-taking, and substance use.

11. Where do I go for more information?

Visit www.childhelp.org and www.speakupbesafe.org