Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

What is child abuse? Child abuse is when someone, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child.

In 2019 there were 656,000 victims of child abuse* On average 5 CHILDREN DIE each day from child abuse* #fivetoomany

**PHYSICAL ABUSE**
- bruises, burns, cuts
- broken bones
- internal injuries, brain damage
- fear of parent/caregiver

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
- delays in development
- illnesses like ulcers, skin disorders
- anxiety, depression
- social isolation

**SEXUAL ABUSE**
- difficulty sitting, walking
- bleeding or bruises near genital area
- depression, eating disorders
- decline in school performance

**CHILD NEGLECT**
- low weight or height for age
- poor hygiene, inadequate clothing
- untreated medical problems
- struggling in school, often tired

**BULLYING**
- unexplained injuries
- hesitant to go to school
- lost or damaged possessions
- loss of friendships, low self-esteem

**ONLINE ABUSE**
- reluctant to discuss online activity
- depression or low self-esteem
- unexplained messages from strangers
- explicit content on devices

**RISK FACTORS & PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

**RISK FACTORS**
- special needs
- family history of abuse/neglect
- substance abuse
- mental health issues
- social isolation

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS**
- supportive environments
- parental employment
- good coping skills
- child monitoring
- child abuse prevention education, like Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe (www.speakupbesafe.org)

In case of emergency call 911

Questions? Not sure where to turn? TEXT • CHAT • CALL
24 hrs/day, 7 days/week

CHILDHELP NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
1-800-4-A-CHILD
childhelphotline.org

*Child Maltreatment 2019 report
Physical Child Abuse

Physical child abuse is any non-accidental physical injury to a child.

**RISK FACTORS**
- abuser was abused as child
- substance abuse
- community violence
- stress in the home
- mental health issues

**SIGNS IN PARENT/CAREGIVER**
- history of violence and/or abuse
- can’t or won’t explain child’s injuries
- critical, aggressive toward child
- delays/prevents medical care for child
- keeps child isolated

**PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- bruises, burns, cuts, broken bones, sprains, dislocated joints
- injuries at different stages of healing or with distinctive shapes
- unexplained injuries
- internal injuries, brain damage
- frequency and history of injuries (e.g., after weekends, vacations)

**BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- wears long sleeves out of season
- afraid of certain adults or going with them
- withdrawn, depressed, anxious
- self-destructive, acts out, aggressive
- violent themes in play, artwork, etc.
- reports severe discipline

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS**
Protective factors decrease the potential for abuse.

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Childhelp exists to meet the physical, emotional, educational and spiritual needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children.
Emotional Child Abuse

Emotional child abuse involves harming a child’s mental and social development.

RISK FACTORS
- community violence
- social isolation
- family history of abuse
- substance abuse

More than 1 in 3 adults report emotional abuse in their own childhood.

SIGNS IN PARENT/CAREGIVER
- rejecting or ignoring child
- playing favorites
- constantly criticizing child
- poor anger management
- stormy relationships
- disrespect for authority

SIGNS IN CHILD
- development delays
- speech disorders
- wetting bed or pants
- unexplained health issues
- weight fluctuation

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Sexual Child Abuse

Sexual child abuse is an adult or older/stronger youth using a child for sexual gratification (contact or non-contact).

**RISK FACTORS**
- loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, disability
- lack of parental supervision
- troubled or shifting family relationships
- stress in the home
- substance abuse

**SIGNS OF**

**RISK FACTORS**
- jealous, possessive
- fails to supervise child
- has troubled sexual relationships
- relies on child for emotional support

**PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- difficulty sitting/walking, bowel problems
- bleeding, bruises, pain of genital area
- sexually transmitted disease
- eating disorders, weight fluctuation
- decline in school performance

**BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- anxiety, nightmares, low self-esteem
- neuroses, inexplicable illness
- sexual knowledge beyond own age
- substance abuse
- withdrawn, self-destructive, suicidal

More than 1 in 9 adults report sexual abuse in their own childhood.

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Child Neglect

Child neglect occurs when a responsible party does not provide a child with needed care, supervision, affection, and support.

**RISK FACTORS**
- parent lacks understanding of child’s needs
- substance abuse, mental health issues
- stress in the home, unlawful behaviors
- lack of resources
- physical disability

**SIGNS IN PARENT/CAREGIVER**
- indifferent or uncaring toward child
- depression, apathy, drug/alcohol abuse, mental health issues
- denies problems with child or blames the child for problems
- views child negatively
- relies on child for own care and well-being

**PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- clothing that is dirty, wrong size, or not right for weather
- very low body weight, height for age
- hygiene problems, body odor
- untreated medical and dental problems

**BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD**
- seeks or stockpiles food
- often tired, sleepy, listless
- talks about caring for siblings, lack of caregiver at home
- truancy, frequent changes of school

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More than 60% of child abuse involves neglect.

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Bullying (physical, social, or verbal) is repeated, targeted, aggressive behavior, often by youth with more power, or by an adult.

**Youth Who Bully**
- mistreated at home
- low parental involvement
- view aggression as positive

**Youth Who Is Bullied**
- perceived as different, unpopular, weak
- anxious, depressed, or have low-esteem

**Both**
- may lack emotional regulation
- youth who are bullied may also bully

**RISK FACTORS**

**Youth Who Bully**
- aggressive physically and/or verbally
- blames others for their problems
- may feel superior to others, be part of a clique
- concerned about status and reputation
- has unexplained new possession or extra money

**Youth Who Is Bullied**
- unexplainable injuries
- lost or damaged clothing, possessions reluctant to attend school or social events
- self-destructive, frequently ill
- loss of friends, trouble sleeping

**Both**
- may lack emotional regulation
- youth who are bullied may also bully

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

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**Around 20%** of students report being bullied.
Online Child Abuse

Online abuse, or cyberabuse, is aggressive or predatory behavior that takes place online or on digital devices. It includes cyberbullying, which is similar to bullying but done online, social apps, and text/email. It also includes predators who groom kids online for exploitation.

Grooming Includes
- targeting a child, gaining trust and access
- isolating child, becoming a secret friend
- desensitizing with sexual talk, images
- getting private info/images
- controlling through fear

Signs A Child Is Being Groomed
- secret online accounts, activities
- sexual knowledge beyond their age
- sharing personal information with strangers
- suggestive selfies on their device(s)

Risk Factors
- lack of parental supervision
- isolated, needful of attention
- physical, mental, developmental disabilities
- lacking healthy relationships

Signs in Parent/Caregiver
- hides screen from others, has secret accounts
- is online excessively, upset when denied access
- takes excessive interest in kids and their activities
- sends gifts to children

Online Grooming
Online grooming can lead to exploiting the child online and/or in person through pornography, sex trafficking, etc.

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