

# Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse



## Child abuse can take many forms...

**Physical Abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child**

**What are the signs?**

### **Child Indicators -**

- Has unexplained physical injuries
- Premature loss of teeth
- Verbally reports abuse
- Wary of adult contact
- Consistent anger, aggression, or hyperactivity
- Behavioural extremes
- Role reversal
- Developmental lags
- Appears frightened of carer
- Apprehensive when other children cry
- Wears clothes to cover injuries
- Seeks affection from any adult indiscriminately
- Non-expression of his or her needs
- Non-communicative

### **Carer Indicators -**

- Seems unconcerned about child
- Seems anxious and overwhelmed by their child's needs
- Takes an unusual amount of time to obtain medical care for the child
- Offers an inadequate or inappropriate explanation for the child's injury
- Takes child to a different doctor or hospital for each injury
- Substance abuser
- Disciplines the child too harshly
- Describes the child in a consistently negative manner
- Has poor impulse control

**Sexual Abuse occurs when someone involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust**

**What are the signs?**

### **Child Indicators -**

- Has difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia
- Venereal disease
- Pregnancy
- Foreign matter in bladder, rectum or urethra
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Aggressive, overt sexual behaviour
- Drawing pictures of people with genitals
- Cruelty to animals without physiological basis
- Pre-mature knowledge of explicit sexual acts
- Sleep disorders
- Taking frequent baths
- Starting fires
- Poor peer relationships
- Wary of physical contact, especially with an adult

### **Carer Indicators -**

- Very protective or jealous of child
- Extremely protective of family privacy
- Does not allow child to be involved in extra-curricular activities
- Encourages child to engage in prostitution
- Substance abuser
- Is geographically isolated and/or lacking in social and emotional contacts outside the family
- Has low self-esteem

**Emotional Abuse is any behaviour that damages the confidence and self esteem of a child, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma**

**What are the signs?**

### **Child Indicators -**

- Speech disorders
- Lags in physical development
- Failure to thrive
- Attempted suicide
- Habit disorders (sucking, biting, or rocking)
- Low self-esteem
- Difficulty forming positive relationships
- Elimination problems
- Inability to trust
- Neurotic traits
- Behavioural extremes
- Overly adaptive behaviour
- Apathetic
- Withdrawn
- Reports emotional maltreatment

### **Carer Indicators -**

- Treats children in family unequally
- Doesn't appear to care about the child's problems
- Blames or belittles the child
- Is cold and rejecting
- Withholds love
- Finds nothing positive about the child

**Neglect is the chronic failure to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development**

**What are the signs?**

### **Child Indicators -**

- Consistent hunger and poor hygiene
- Inappropriate dress
- Chronically unclean
- Consistent lack of supervision
- Unattended physical / medical/ dental needs
- Often tired or listless
- Abandonment
- Underweight
- Developmental lags
- Bald spots on an infant's head
- Begging or stealing food
- Extended stays in school
- Early arrival/late departures at school
- Attendance at school infrequent
- Substance abuser
- States there is no parent or carer

### **Carer Indicators -**

- Has diagnosed chaotic, upsetting home life
- Is apathetic, feels nothing will change
- Is isolated from friends, relatives, neighbours
- Cannot be found
- Expects too much of a child
- Substance abuser
- Exposes child to unsafe living conditions

**If you know or believe that a child is being abused it is vital that you do the following:**

- Make a report to the relevant Government Department in your State for each instance of abuse.
- Don't try and solve the problem yourself.
- Don't pressure the child involved to disclose information to you.
- Keep written records of all indicators of abuse and other relevant information.
- Provide unconditional support and understanding to the child involved.
- Follow your workplace practices and procedures for reporting.



**child abuse prevention service**

**For confidential support or information call  
02 9716 8000**

**[www.childabuseprevention.com.au](http://www.childabuseprevention.com.au)**