

Signs of Abuse or Neglect

CHILD ABUSE OVERVIEW

Child abuse and neglect can create a lifetime of harmful effects on its victims. Studies show that child abuse and neglect can impact a child negatively throughout their lifetime. It can have harmful effects on school performance, development of health relationships, and create issues that can impact an entire community. Child abuse is any physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or other act involving a child with intent to harm the child. Child abuse can take the form of physical abuse, emotional or mental abuse, sexual assault, or neglect. You can help prevent abuse by becoming familiar with abuse and neglect and recognizing the signs.

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Unexplained Injuries. Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.

Changes in Behavior. Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children may appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn, or more aggressive.

Fear of Going Home. Abused children may have apprehension of leaving school or community sites or going with someone who may be abusing them.

Changes in Eating. The stress associated with abuse may lead to changes in a child's eating patterns including weight gain or loss.

Changes in Sleeping. Abused children may have difficulty falling asleep or may have frequent nightmares. As a result they may appear tired or fatigued.

Change in School Performance or Attendance. Abused children may have excessive absences or trouble concentrating at school.

Lack of Personal Care or Hygiene. Abused children may appear uncared for. They may have dirty clothes or body odor or lack appropriate clothing for the weather.

Risk-Taking Behavior. Young people experiencing abuse may engage in high-risk behavior including alcohol or drug abuse or carrying a weapon.

Inappropriate Sexual Behavior. Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

REPORTING ABUSE

If you suspect that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect take action to save a child. You may report the suspected abuse by contacting your local county Department of Human Resources or Police department.

APEC IS HERE TO HELP

APEC provides free training, information, and consultation to families. Visit our training calendar for more information about learning opportunities at www.alabamaparentcenter.com or call our center.

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