

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse happens when a child's parent or other person in charge harms or neglects a child.

What are the types of child abuse?

In general, there are four major types of child abuse:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect

What is physical child abuse?

Physical abuse could result from a parent or person in charge causing physical injury to a child, or failing to adequately supervise a child or from a pattern of neglect of the child. Here are some examples of physical abuse:

- beating
- slapping
- hitting
- pushing
- throwing
- shaking
- burning

A child who is physically abused may:

- have burns, bite marks, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object
- not want to go home
- be afraid of adults

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse happens when a parent or other person in charge sexually molests or uses a child for sexual purposes or knowingly fails to protect a child from sexual abuse. Here are some examples of sexual abuse:

- any sexual act between an adult and a child, including intercourse
- fondling
- exposing a child to adult sexual activity
- sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography

A child who is sexually abused may:

- have an inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts

- be very compliant or extremely aggressive
- be afraid of a certain person or a family member
- have difficulty walking or sitting

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse occurs when a parent or other person in charge causes emotional harm or fails to protect a child from emotional harm that results from verbal abuse, mental abuse and psychological abuse.

Here are some examples of emotional abuse:

- yelling at, screaming at, threatening, frightening, or bullying a child
- humiliating the child, name-calling, making negative comparisons to others, or saying things like: "You're no good. You're worthless. You're bad. Having you was a mistake."
- showing little to no physical affection (such as hugs) or words of affection (praise or saying "I love you.")
- saying that everything is the child's fault.
- withdrawing attention, giving the child the "cold shoulder"
- confining a child in a closet or a dark room, or tying the child to a chair for long periods of time
- allowing the child to be present during violent behavior of others, including the physical abuse of others

A child who is emotionally abused may:

- show signs of serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal
- show self-destructive or aggressive behavior
- show delays physical, emotional or mental development

What is neglect?

Neglect happens when a child's parent or other person in charge does not provide for a child's physical, developmental, emotional or psychological needs.

Here are some examples of neglect:

- failing to provide:
 - proper food
 - clothing suitable for the weather
 - supervision
 - a home that is clean and safe



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- medical care, as needed
- failing to provide emotional support, love and affection

- Local or State office of Department of Human Resources
- Local law enforcement agency

A child who is neglected may:

- not wear clothing that's suitable for the weather
- be dirty or unbathed
- be very hungry
- not be properly supervised

WAYS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Be a nurturing parent.
- Help a friend, neighbor, or relative by watching their children and giving them a break.
- Help yourself by taking time out when you feel overwhelmed.
- Never ever shake a baby as it may result in serious injury or death.
- Get involved to create or grow programs and services in your local community to help families be healthy and supported.
- Monitor your child's television and internet use and exposure to violence as it may harm your children.
- Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention program.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect.

HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

If you suspect that a child may be the victim of abuse or neglect it is your responsibility to report it. You may contact your:

MANDATORY REPORTER

Alabama Law defines that some professionals are required by law to report suspected abuse including but not limited to:

- Hospital and medical staff
- Dentists
- Teachers and school staff
- Law enforcement officers and staff
- Day care workers
- Mental health workers
- Clergy and faith leaders


Mandatory reports are required to report all suspected abuse immediately to the Department of Human Resources or Local Law Enforcement. Failure to report is a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and a monetary fine. Additional civil liabilities may also be pursued.

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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