

What You Should Know

ABOUT RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE

The first step in helping abused children is learning to recognize the symptoms of child abuse. Although child abuse is divided into four types -- physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment -- the types are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child for example is often emotionally maltreated as well, and a sexually abused child may be also neglected. Any child at any age may experience any of the types of child abuse. Children over age five are more likely to be physically abused and to suffer moderate injury than are children under age five.

ABUSE OR NEGLECT MAY BE OCCURRING IF

THE CHILD:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, an overachiever, or too responsible
- Comes to school early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS



Neglect

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money from classmates
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States there is no one at home to provide care

Physical Abuse

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home from school
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Emotional Maltreatment

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Sexual Abuse

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age fourteen
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED



- Prepare - a child may disclose abuse whenever you are around children
- Remain calm
- Give the child your undivided attention - find a private place to talk
- Document the child's exact words
- Provide an appropriate and supportive response such as "I believe you" or "It's not your fault"
- Reassure the child about telling by saying something like "I'm so proud you told"
- Reassure the child that he or she is not in trouble with you
- Respect the child's confidentiality and privacy of his or her disclosure
- Consider how your body language, facial expression and words may affect the child
- Consider the child's safety - e.g. can the child go home today?
- Report abuse immediately to the Department of Human Services or local law enforcement

* The report is mandated by law to be submitted within 48 hours by the first person made aware of any abuse allegation

Report abuse:

- Website: <https://www.reportabuse.mdcps.ms.gov>
- Phone: 1-800-222-8000
- Phone App: MDCPS Report Child Abuse

MANDATED REPORTER GUIDE

DO NOT ASK THE CHILD:

- To provide the details of the allegation
- What (The peripheral details of what happened)
- When (Number of times, date of alleged incident(s), etc.).
- Where (Location of abuse, the room in which the abuse occurred, etc.)
- How (Body positioning, positioning of clothing, etc.)
- Circumstances (Were there witnesses, who did the child tell, etc.)

*For example, If a child has reported "Daddy touches my private at night," this is all the information that child needs to give prior to a forensic interview.

BEHAVIORS TO AVOID:

- Do not react with panic or other strong emotions
- Do not try to conduct your own investigation or try to validate the child's report
- Do not ask detail-seeking questions
- Do not use interview tools such as dolls or diagrams to learn more
- Do not ask the child to repeat his or her statement for others
- Do not share the information with others
- Do not confront or challenge the child
- Do not try to re-frame what the child has told you
- Do not lie or make promises about what will happen next
- Do not have the child provide a written statement
- Do not inform the alleged perpetrator
- You are not required to contact the parent