

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE & OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

### How to document indicators of child abuse

When documenting any indicators of child abuse or family violence remember to:

- record the information as soon as possible, including dates and times document the facts without personal judgements, opinions, conclusions, or medical/emotional diagnosis
- give a clear description of the situation, what was actually seen or heard, and not what you think might be happening
- include what you did or said and why describe any gestures made by a child (e.g., hitting motions, sound effects);
- record the words used by a child/parent, even if they are “slang” (especially terms for body parts or sexual behavior)
- include anything that someone else has said that might be important
- describe the size, color and shape of any injury (for example, bruises, marks, burns)
- hand write your own documentation in your own words, using pen
- cross out and initial any mistakes and continue documenting – do not use white-out
- document suspicions of abuse in a separate record
- include the name and phone number of the individual you spoke with at a child protection agency and/or police service, and any advice/direction given
- make sure the entry is complete, then sign and date it
- start a new entry if, at a later date, there is new information or further suspicions of abuse

***Your first recording of the facts is your documentation:***

- ***do not make a rough copy and then write it over in good;***
- ***do not go back and change any of your original notes; and***
- ***do not shred documentation.***

**Indicators of child abuse**

- Indicators are the signs, symptoms or clues which may mean that a child has been abused or may be at risk for abuse.
- Indicators do not prove that a child has been abused. They are clues that should warn people that a child may need help.
- Indicators may be seen in the child's physical health or behaviour, as well as those of the child's caregivers.
- Adults who abuse children may show certain behaviours and attitudes that make other people worry if they should be caring for children.