

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Generally, child abuse is divided into four types:

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse

NEGLECT

Neglect is when a parent/caregiver does not provide for the basic emotional and physical needs of the child on an ongoing basis. Examples of neglect include not providing the proper:

- food
- clothing
- housing
- supervision
- safe surroundings
- personal health care
- medical and emotional care
- education

Children who are neglected physically and emotionally may not develop normally. Some children may suffer permanent damage.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse includes anything a parent/caregiver does that results in physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may happen if a child is punished harshly, even though the parent/caregiver may not have meant to hurt the child.

Examples of physical abuse include:

- bruises
- marks in the shape of objects or hand prints
- shaking
- burns
- human bite marks
- fractures of the skull, arms, legs and ribs
- female genital mutilation

Physical abuse may result in a minor injury (such as a bruise) to a more serious injury which could cause lasting damage or death (for example from shaking a child).

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse occurs when a person uses power over a child, and involves the child in any sexual act. This abuser is more powerful because of age, intelligence, physical strength, control over the child, and the child's need to be taken care of by others. The offender gets the child to participate by using threats, bribes, lying and taking advantage of the child's trust.

Sexual abuse includes involving the child in acts such as:

- fondling (touching the child in a sexual way)
- getting the child to touch the abuser inappropriately
- oral sex
- inserting fingers, penis, or objects in the vagina or anus
- exposing oneself
- allowing a child to watch pornography
- involving a child in pornography or prostitution
- sexual exploitation over the Internet

Most sexual offenders are people the children know.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

A parent/caregiver who continually uses any of the following when interacting or disciplining a child is emotionally abusing the child.

- rejecting (e.g., saying “I wish you were never born.”)
- criticizing (e.g., saying “Why can’t you do anything right?”)
- insulting (e.g., saying “I can’t believe you would be so stupid.”)
- humiliating (e.g., embarrassing a child in front of other people)
- isolating (e.g., not allowing a child to play with friends)
- terrorizing (e.g., scaring a child by saying “The police will come and take you away.”)
- corrupting (e.g., always swearing in front of the child, or getting the child to participate in things against the law)
- not responding emotionally
- punishing a child for exploring the environment

Children who are exposed to violence in their homes may suffer emotional harm watching a loved one being physically or verbally attacked.