

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

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## 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 suspicions of abuse in a separate record (e.g., on a *Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form*)
- 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; this is especially important for sensitive issues (e.g., substance use, mental health, sexual activity)
- include what you did or said, and why
- describe in detail any electronic pictures, videos, texts, emails and/or messages on apps that were shown or told to you (e.g., if a teenager show you any of these on their phone)
- describe any gestures made by a child (e.g., hitting motions, sound effects)
- record the words used by a child/caregiver, 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
- 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, sign and date it, put it in a sealed envelope – on the back of the envelope print and sign your name, print the date, the child’s name and the word “confidential”
- 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 draft and then write it over in good;
- do not go back and change any of your original notes; and
- do not shred documentation.

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## INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

- Indicators are the signs, symptoms or clues that 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.

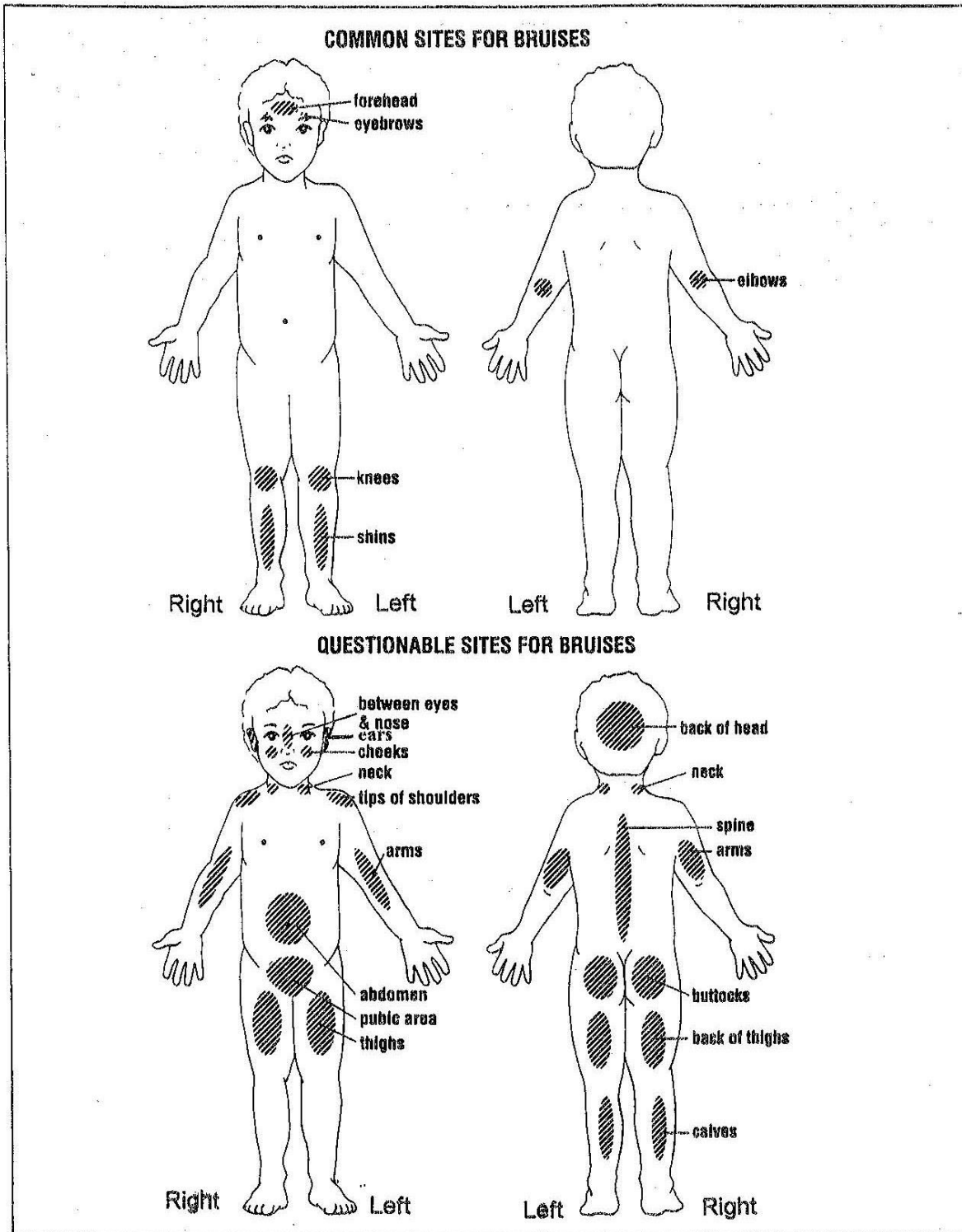
## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO NEGLECT CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ an infant or young child may:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– not be growing as expected</li> <li>– be losing weight</li> <li>– have a “wrinkly old face”</li> <li>– looks pale</li> <li>– not be eating well</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ not dressed properly for the weather</li> <li>○ dirty or unwashed</li> <li>○ bad diaper rash or other skin problems</li> <li>○ always hungry</li> <li>○ lack of medical and/or dental care</li> <li>○ signs of deprivation that improve with a more nurturing environment (e.g., hunger, diaper rash)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ does not show skills as expected</li> <li>○ appears to have little energy</li> <li>○ cries very little</li> <li>○ does not play with toys or notice people</li> <li>○ does not seem to care for parent</li> <li>○ may be very demanding of affection or attention from others</li> <li>○ older children may steal food, drink alcohol or take drugs, break the law</li> <li>○ does not go to school regularly</li> <li>○ takes care of a lot of their needs on their own</li> <li>○ has a lot of adult responsibility at home</li> <li>○ discloses neglect (e.g., says there is no one at home)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ does not provide for the child’s basic needs</li> <li>○ has a disorganized home life, with few regular routines (e.g., always brings the child very early, picks the child up very late)</li> <li>○ does not supervise the child properly (e.g., leaves the child alone, in a dangerous place, or with someone who cannot look after the child safely)</li> <li>○ indicates that the child is hard to care for, hard to feed, describes the child as demanding</li> <li>○ may say that the child was or is unwanted</li> <li>○ may ignore the child who is trying to be loving</li> <li>○ has difficulty dealing with personal problems and needs</li> <li>○ is more concerned with own self than the child</li> <li>○ is not very interested in the child’s life (e.g., fails to use services offered or to keep child’s appointments, does not do anything about concerns that are discussed)</li> </ul>

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ see diagram for questionable injuries</li> <li>○ bruises in the same area of the body</li> <li>○ bruises in the shape of an object (e.g., spoon, hand/fingerprints, belt)</li> <li>○ burns:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– from a cigarette</li> <li>– in a pattern that looks like an object (e.g., iron)</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ wears clothes to cover up injury, even in warm weather</li> <li>○ patches of hair missing</li> <li>○ signs of possible head injury:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– swelling and pain</li> <li>– nausea or vomiting</li> <li>– feeling dizzy</li> <li>– bleeding from the scalp or nose</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ signs of possible injury to arms and legs:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– pain</li> <li>– sensitive to touch</li> <li>– cannot move properly</li> <li>– limping</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ breathing causes pain</li> <li>○ difficulty raising arms</li> <li>○ human bite marks</li> <li>○ cuts and scrapes inconsistent with normal play</li> <li>○ signs of female genital mutilation (e.g., trouble going to the bathroom)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ cannot remember how injuries happened</li> <li>○ the explanation of what happened does not match the injury</li> <li>○ refuses or is afraid to talk about injuries</li> <li>○ is afraid of adults or of a particular person</li> <li>○ does not want to be touched</li> <li>○ may be very:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– aggressive</li> <li>– unhappy</li> <li>– withdrawn</li> <li>– obedient and wanting to please</li> <li>– uncooperative</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ is afraid to go home</li> <li>○ runs away</li> <li>○ is away a lot and when comes back there are signs of a healing injury</li> <li>○ does not show skills as expected</li> <li>○ does not get along well with other children</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to hurt oneself without the intention of dying (e.g., cutting oneself)</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to kill oneself</li> <li>○ discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ does not give the same explanation as the child about how the injury happened</li> <li>○ says that the child seems to have a lot of accidents</li> <li>○ severely punishes the child</li> <li>○ cannot control anger and frustration</li> <li>○ expects too much from the child</li> <li>○ talks about having problems dealing with the child</li> <li>○ talks about the child as being bad, different or “the cause of my problems”</li> <li>○ does not show love toward the child</li> <li>○ does not go to the doctor right away to have injury checked</li> <li>○ has little or no help caring for the child</li> </ul>

## CHILDREN'S BRUISES



(Source: Rimer & Prager, *Reaching Out: Working Together to Identify and Respond to Child Victims of Abuse*, 1998)

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a lot of itching or pain in the throat, genital or anal area</li> <li>○ a smell or discharge from the genital area</li> <li>○ underwear that is bloody</li> <li>○ pain when:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– trying to go to the bathroom</li> <li>– sitting down</li> <li>– walking</li> <li>– swallowing</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ blood in urine or stool</li> <li>○ injury to the breasts or genital area:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– redness</li> <li>– bruising</li> <li>– cuts</li> <li>– swelling</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ copying the sexual behaviour of adults</li> <li>○ knowing more about sex than expected</li> <li>○ details of sex in the child’s drawings/writing</li> <li>○ sexual actions with other children or adults that are inappropriate</li> <li>○ sexual behaviour with other children that involves force or secrecy</li> <li>○ fears or refuses to go to a parent, relative, or friend for no clear reason</li> <li>○ does not trust others</li> <li>○ changes in personality that do not make sense (e.g., happy child becomes withdrawn)</li> <li>○ problems or change in sleep pattern (e.g., nightmares)</li> <li>○ very demanding of affection or attention, or clinging</li> <li>○ goes back to behaving like a young child (e.g., bedwetting, thumb-sucking)</li> <li>○ refuses to be undressed, or when undressing shows fear</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to hurt oneself without the intention of dying (e.g., cutting oneself)</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to kill oneself</li> <li>○ misuse of drugs or alcohol</li> <li>○ talks or knows about digital recording technology/being recorded</li> <li>○ discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ may be very protective of the child</li> <li>○ clings to the child for comfort</li> <li>○ is often alone with the child</li> <li>○ may be jealous of the child’s relationships with others</li> <li>○ does not like the child to be with friends unless the parent is present</li> <li>○ talks about the child being “sexy”</li> <li>○ touches the child in a sexual way</li> <li>○ may use drugs or alcohol to feel freer to sexually abuse</li> <li>○ allows or tries to get the child to participate in sexual behaviour</li> <li>○ signs of child sexual abuse media: spending a lot of time online insisting on being alone/not being disturbed</li> </ul>

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the child does not develop as expected</li> <li>○ often complains of nausea, headaches, stomach aches without any obvious reason</li> <li>○ wets or dirties pants</li> <li>○ is not given food, clothing and care as good as what the other children get</li> <li>○ may have unusual appearance (e.g., strange haircuts, dress, decorations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ is unhappy, stressed out, withdrawn, aggressive or angry for long periods of time</li> <li>○ goes back to behaving like a young child (e.g., toileting problems, thumb-sucking, constant rocking)</li> <li>○ tries too hard to be good and to get adults to approve</li> <li>○ tries really hard to get attention</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to hurt oneself without the intention of dying (e.g., cutting oneself)</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to kill oneself</li> <li>○ misuse of drugs or alcohol</li> <li>○ criticizes oneself a lot</li> <li>○ does not participate because of fear of failing</li> <li>○ may expect too much of themselves so gets frustrated and fails</li> <li>○ is afraid of what the adult will do if they do something the adult does not like</li> <li>○ runs away</li> <li>○ has a lot of adult responsibility</li> <li>○ does not get along well with other children</li> <li>○ discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ often rejects, insults or criticizes the child, even in front of others</li> <li>○ does not touch or speak to the child with love</li> <li>○ talks about the child as being the cause for problems and things not going as wished</li> <li>○ talks about or treats the child as being different from other children and family members</li> <li>○ compares the child to someone who is not liked</li> <li>○ does not pay attention to the child and refuses to help them</li> <li>○ isolates the child; does not allow the child to see others, both inside and outside the family</li> <li>○ does not provide a good example for children on how to behave with others (e.g., swears all the time, hits others)</li> <li>○ lets the child be involved in illegal activities</li> <li>○ uses the child to make money (e.g., produces child sexual abuse media)</li> <li>○ lets the child see sex and violence (on TV, movies, in magazines, on the Internet)</li> <li>○ terrorizes the child (e.g., threatens to hurt or kill the child or threatens someone or something that is special to the child)</li> <li>○ forces the child to watch someone special being hurt</li> <li>○ asks the child to do more than they can do</li> </ul>

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the child does not develop as expected</li> <li>○ often complains of nausea, headaches, stomach aches without any obvious reason</li> <li>○ physical harm, whether deliberate or accidental, during or after a violent episode, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– while trying to protect others</li> <li>– the result of objects thrown</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ may be aggressive and have temper tantrums</li> <li>○ may show withdrawn, depressed, and nervous behaviours (e.g., clinging, whining, a lot of crying)</li> <li>○ acts out what has been seen or heard between the partners that may include verbal and/or physical aggression toward the victimized partner</li> <li>○ tries too hard to be good and to get adult approval</li> <li>○ afraid of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– someone’s anger</li> <li>– one’s own anger (e.g., killing the abuser)</li> <li>– self or other loved ones being hurt or killed</li> <li>– being left alone and not cared for</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ problems sleeping (e.g., cannot fall asleep, afraid of the dark, does not want to go to bed, nightmares)</li> <li>○ bedwetting</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to hurt oneself without the intention of dying (e.g., cutting oneself)</li> <li>○ thinking about or trying to kill oneself</li> <li>○ misuse of drugs or alcohol</li> <li>○ stays around the house to keep watch, or tries not to spend much time at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ abuser has trouble controlling self</li> <li>○ abuser has trouble talking and getting along with others</li> <li>○ abuser uses threats and violence (e.g., threatens to hurt, kill or destroy someone or something that is special; cruel to animals)</li> <li>○ forces the child to watch a parent/partner being hurt</li> <li>○ abuser is always watching what the partner is doing</li> <li>○ abuser insults, blames, and criticizes partner in front of others</li> <li>○ jealous of partner talking or being with others</li> <li>○ abuser does not allow the child or family to talk with or see others</li> <li>○ the abused person is not able to care properly for the children because of isolation, depression, trying to survive, or because the abuser does not give enough money</li> <li>○ holds the belief that men have the power and women have to obey</li> <li>○ uses drugs or alcohol</li> <li>○ the abused person seems to be frightened</li> <li>○ discloses family violence</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ problems with school (e.g., trouble paying attention, poor marks, misses school a lot)</li> <li>○ expects a lot of oneself and is afraid to fail and so works very hard and gets good marks in school</li> <li>○ takes on the job of helping/looking after/protecting other family members (e.g., the victimized parent and siblings)</li> <li>○ does not get along well with other children</li> <li>○ runs away from home</li> <li>○ cruelty to animals</li> <li>○ older children may steal, hurt others, join a gang or break the law</li> <li>○ child may act out sexually</li> <li>○ child expresses the belief that they are responsible for the violence</li> <li>○ discloses family violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ discloses that the abuser assaulted or threw objects at someone holding a child</li> </ul>
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(Adapted from: Rimer & Prager, *Reaching Out: Working Together to Identify and Respond to Child Victims of Abuse*, 2016)

## POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING

PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN YOUTH	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN YOUTH	BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN TRAFFICKERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ sleeps a lot during the day and awake/out at night</li> <li>○ disoriented</li> <li>○ unexplained bruises or injuries</li> <li>○ tattoos: names, date of birth, symbols (showing signs of branding by the trafficker)</li> <li>○ may look malnourished; displays a change in eating patterns/behaviours</li> <li>○ sexually transmitted infections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ becomes isolated from family and friends</li> <li>○ suddenly has a new group of people they are spending time with</li> <li>○ suddenly becomes secretive about where they are going and who with</li> <li>○ change in mood: angry, hostile, aggressive, anxious, depressed</li> <li>○ substance use/addiction</li> <li>○ doesn't want to talk about their day</li> <li>○ uses cell phone more; has multiple phones</li> <li>○ may disappear for long periods of time without an explanation</li> <li>○ change in their everyday language; street slang</li> <li>○ misses school</li> <li>○ fearful for the safety of their family</li> <li>○ has many condoms</li> <li>○ suddenly has expensive items (e.g., clothes, jewellery, cell phone)</li> <li>○ runs away</li> <li>○ do not see themselves as a victim, but believes they are in a romantic relationship</li> <li>○ discloses involvement in sex trafficking and/or asks for help to leave the situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ promises lavish gifts</li> <li>○ manipulates the victim by pretending to be in love with them</li> <li>○ gives the victim alcohol/drugs</li> <li>○ does not allow the victim to have medical care</li> <li>○ threatens victim's family members</li> <li>○ does not allow the victim to have any money</li> <li>○ takes away/destroys the victim's identification</li> <li>○ is a member of/associated with a gang</li> </ul>