



Child Abuse  
Awareness

April 2020 #2

# What is Child Abuse?

- Any intentional harm or mistreatment to a child under 18 years old is considered child abuse. Child abuse takes many forms, which often occur at the same time.
- **Physical abuse-** physical child abuse occurs when a child is purposely physically injured or put at risk of harm by another person.
- **Sexual abuse-** sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child, such as fondling, oral-genital contact, intercourse, exploitation or exposure to child pornography.
- **Emotional abuse-** emotional child abuse means injuring a child's self esteem or emotional well-being. It includes verbal and emotional assault--such as continually belittling or berating a child--as well as isolating, ignoring or rejecting a child.
- **Medical abuse-** medical child abuse occurs when someone gives false information about illness in a child that requires medical attention, putting the child at risk of injury and unnecessary medical care.
- **Neglect-** child neglect is failure to provide adequate food, shelter, affection, supervision, education, or dental or medical care.
- In many cases child abuse is done by someone the child knows and trusts- often a parent or other relative. If you suspect child abuse, report abuse to the proper authorities.

# Symptoms

- A child who is being abused may feel guilty, ashamed or confused. He or she may be afraid to tell anyone about the abuse, especially if the abuser is a parent, other relative or family friend. That is why it is vital to watch for red flags, such as:
  - Withdrawal from friends or usual activities
  - Changes in behavior- such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity- or changes in school performance.
  - Depression, anxiety or unusual fears, or sudden loss of self-confidence
  - An apparent lack of supervision
  - Frequent absences from school
  - Reluctance to leave school activities, as if he or she doesn't want to go home
  - Attempts at running away
  - Rebellious or defiant behavior
  - Self-harm or attempts at suicide
- Specific signs and symptoms depend on the type of abuse and can vary. Keep in mind that warning signs are just that- warning signs. The presence of warning signs doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being abused.

# Specific Symptoms

- Physical Abuse
  - Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures or burns
  - Injuries that don't match the given explanation
- Sexual Abuse
  - Sexual behavior or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age
  - Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection
  - Blood in the child's underwear
  - Statements that he/she was sexually abused
  - Inappropriate sexual contact with other children
- Emotional Abuse
  - Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
  - Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
  - Social withdrawal or a loss of interest or enthusiasm
  - Depression
  - Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride the bus
  - Desperately seeks affection

# Specific Symptoms Cont.

- Neglect
  - Poor growth or weight gain or being overweight
  - Poor hygiene
  - Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
  - Taking food or money without permission
  - Hiding food for later
  - Poor record of school attendance
  - Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental or psychological problems or lack of necessary follow-up care

# Parental Behavior

Sometimes a parent's demeanor or behavior sends red flags about child abuse. Warning signs include a parent who:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Appears unable to recognize physical or emotional distress in the child
- Blames the child for the problems
- Constantly belittles or berates the child, and describes the child with negative terms, such as worthless or evil.
- Expects the child to provide him or her with attention and care and seems jealous of other family members getting attention from the child
- Uses harsh physical discipline
- Demands an inappropriate level of physical or academic performance
- Severely limits the child's contact with others
- Offers conflicting or unconvincing explanations for a child's injuries or no explanation at all

Child health experts condemn the use of violence in any form, but some people still use corporal punishment, such as spanking, as a way to discipline their children. Remember any corporal punishment may leave emotional scars.

# Child Abuse Statistics

- Every year more than 3.6 million referrals are made to child protection agencies.
- The United States has one of the worst records among industrialized nations- losing an average between 4 and 7 children everyday to child abuse and neglect.
- In 2018 an estimated 674,000 children were identified as being victims. 74.9% were neglect cases, 18.3% were physical abuse cases and 8.6% were sexually abused.
- In one study, 80% of 21-year olds who reported abuse, met the criteria for at least one psychological disorder.
- It is estimated that lifetime lost work productivity, health care costs, special education costs, child welfare expenditures and criminal justice expenditures added up to 124 billion per year.
- More than 70% of the children who died as a result of child abuse or neglect were two years of age or younger. More than 80% were not yet old enough for kindergarten.
- Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 9 times more likely to become involved in criminal activity.

# So What Are You To Do?

- If you suspect abuse in a client's home, ensure the child's safety and report it to your immediate supervisor. Also document on a nurse aide progress sheet and turn into your office.
- You are a mandated reporter, so make sure you do this in a timely manner.
- Be vigilant and watch for the signs of abuse while taking care of your clients.