

Recognizing Signs of Abuse & Neglect

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect.

We will review general signs that may signal the presence of child abuse, including signs associated with specific types of maltreatment such as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment.



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Recognizing Child Abuse

Signs and Behaviors Displayed by The Child

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Lack of medical care for physical or medical problems that are known to the parents
- Learning problems that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Always watchful, as if expecting something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early or stays late, and does not want to go home



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Recognizing Child Abuse

Signs and Behaviors Displayed by

The Parent

- Shows little concern for the child or views the child as bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Blames the child for problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs

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Types of Abuse

We will review signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: *physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.*

It is important to note that these types of abuse are more typically found in *combination* than alone.

A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

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Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the following signs are displayed by

The Child

- Unexplained injuries, ie. burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

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Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the following signs are displayed by

The Parent:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

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Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the following signs are displayed by

The Child

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

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Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the following signs are displayed by

The Parent

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

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Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the following signs are displayed by

The Child:

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

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Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the following signs are displayed by

The Parent

- Unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Secretive and isolated with or about the child
- Jealous or controlling with family members

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Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when The Child

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding, 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

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Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

**Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when
The Parent**

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child



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What can you do if you suspect Child Abuse or Neglect?

- Call campus police at 1911, (910) 672-1911, or use the LiveSafe App
- Call Child Protective Services for Cumberland County at (910) 677-2450 or (910) 489-4583 (after hours number) or the Child Protective Services for your area
- Be prepared to provide information and specifics about the possible abuse or neglect of the child