

INFORMATION PACKET:

Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse and Neglect

This self-study was put together by ACRF in September 2005, updated 2026.

ITP Topic: Child Abuse/Domestic Violence/Neglect

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What is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms (April 2019) <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/what-child-abuse-and-neglect-recognizing-signs-and-symptoms/>.

How Can You Help Someone Who is Being Abused or Neglected (September 2018) <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/how-you-can-help-someone-who-being-abused-or-neglected/>

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect - Alaska (May 2023) <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect-alaska/>

The following packet contains information on the above topic. If you wish to receive training credit for reading this packet, please fill out the "Information Packet Questionnaire" at the back of this packet. Return your completed questionnaire to the Alaska Center for Resource Families for 1.0 training credit. The articles are yours to keep for further reference.

For more information about this topic or other topics related to foster care and adoption, please contact:

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What Is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms

The first step in helping children who have been abused or neglected is learning to recognize the signs of maltreatment. The presence of a single sign does not necessarily mean that child maltreatment is occurring in a family, but a closer look at the situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination. This factsheet is intended to help you better understand the Federal definition of child abuse and neglect; learn about the different types of abuse and neglect, including human trafficking; and recognize their signs and symptoms. It also includes additional resources with information on how to effectively identify and report maltreatment and refer children who have been maltreated.

WHAT'S INSIDE

How is child abuse and neglect defined in Federal law?

What are the major types of child abuse and neglect?

Recognizing signs of abuse and neglect and when to report

Resources



HOW IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT DEFINED IN FEDERAL LAW?

Federal legislation lays the groundwork for State laws on child maltreatment by identifying a minimum set of actions or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended and reauthorized by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, defines child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation (including sexual abuse as determined under section 111), or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" (42 U.S.C. 5101 note, § 3).

Additionally, it stipulates that "a child shall be considered a victim of 'child abuse and neglect' and of 'sexual abuse' if the child is identified, by a State or local agency employee of the State or locality involved, as being a victim of sex trafficking¹ (as defined in paragraph (10) of section 7102 of title 22) or a victim of severe forms of trafficking in persons described in paragraph (9)(A) of that section" (42 U.S.C. § 5106(b)(2)).

¹ According to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, sex trafficking is categorized as a "severe form of trafficking in persons" and is defined as a "situation in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age." As of May 2017, States are required to have provisions and procedures in place as part of their CAPTA State Plans that require "identification and assessment of all reports involving children known or suspected to be victims of sex trafficking and...training child protective services workers about identifying, assessing, and providing comprehensive services for children who are sex trafficking victims, including efforts to coordinate with State law enforcement, juvenile justice, and social service agencies such as runaway and homeless youth shelters..."

Most Federal and State child protection laws primarily refer to cases of harm to a child caused by parents or other caregivers; they generally do not include harm caused by other people, such as acquaintances or strangers. Some State laws also include a child's witnessing of domestic violence as a form of abuse or neglect.

For State-specific laws pertaining to child abuse and neglect, see Child Welfare Information Gateway's [State Statutes Search webpage](#).

To view civil definitions that determine the grounds for intervention by State child protective agencies, visit Information Gateway's [Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

[Child Maltreatment reports](#). These annual reports summarize annual child maltreatment and neglect statistics submitted by States to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. They include information about victims, fatalities, perpetrators, services, and additional research.

[Child Welfare Outcomes Report Data](#). This website provides information on the performance of States in seven outcome categories related to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved in the child welfare system. Data, which are made available on the website prior to the release of the annual report, include the number of child victims of maltreatment.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Within the minimum standards set by CAPTA, each State is responsible for providing its own definitions of child abuse and neglect. Most States recognize four major types of maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Additionally, many States identify abandonment, parental substance use, and human trafficking as abuse or neglect. While some of these types of maltreatment may be found separately, they can occur in combination. This section provides brief definitions for each of these types.

Physical abuse is a nonaccidental physical injury to a child caused by a parent, caregiver, or other person responsible for a child and can include punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise causing physical harm.² Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child. Injuries from physical abuse could range from minor bruises to severe fractures or death.

Neglect is the failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs.

Neglect generally includes the following categories:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, lack of appropriate supervision)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment, withholding medically indicated treatment from children with life-threatening conditions)³
- Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, permitting a child to use alcohol or other drugs)

Sometimes cultural values, the standards of care in the community, and poverty may contribute to what is perceived as maltreatment, indicating the family may need information or assistance. It is important to note that living in poverty is not considered child abuse or neglect. However, a family's failure to use available information and resources to care for their child may put the child's health or safety at risk, and child welfare intervention could be required. In addition, many States provide an exception to the definition of neglect for parents who choose not to seek medical care for their children due to religious beliefs.⁴

² Nonaccidental injury that is inflicted by someone other than a parent, guardian, relative, or other caregiver (i.e., a stranger) is considered a criminal act that is not addressed by child protective services.

³ Although it can apply to children of any age, withholding of medically indicated treatment is a form of medical neglect that is defined by CAPTA as "the failure to respond to...life-threatening conditions by providing treatment (including appropriate nutrition, hydration, and medication) which, in the treating physician's or physicians' reasonable medical judgment, will be most likely to be effective in ameliorating or correcting all such conditions..." CAPTA does note a few exceptions, including infants who are "chronically and irreversibly comatose," situations when providing treatment would not save the infant's life but merely prolong dying, or when "the provision of such treatment would be virtually futile in terms of the survival of the infant and the treatment itself under such circumstances would be inhumane."

⁴ The CAPTA amendments of 1996 (42 U.S.C. § 5106i) added new provisions specifying that nothing in the act be construed as establishing a Federal requirement that a parent or legal guardian provide any medical service or treatment that is against the religious beliefs of the parent or legal guardian.

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or other caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA as "the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children" (42 U.S.C. § 5106g(a)(4)).

Emotional abuse (or psychological abuse) is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove, and, therefore, child protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or mental injury to the child (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2016).

Abandonment is considered in many States as a form of neglect. In general, a child is considered to be abandoned when the parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown, the child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers serious harm, the child has been deserted with no regard for their health or safety, or the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support for a specified period of time. Some States have enacted

laws—often called safe haven laws—that provide safe places for parents to relinquish newborn infants. Information Gateway produced a publication, [Infant Safe Haven Laws](#), as part of its State Statutes series, which summarizes such laws.

Parental substance use is included in the definition of child abuse or neglect in many States. Related circumstances that are considered abuse or neglect in some States include the following:

- Exposing a child to harm prenatally due to the mother's use of legal or illegal drugs or other substances
- Manufacturing methamphetamine in the presence of a child
- Selling, distributing, or giving illegal drugs or alcohol to a child
- Using a controlled substance that impairs the caregiver's ability to adequately care for the child

For more information about this issue, see Information Gateway's publication, [Parental Substance Use: A Primer for Child Welfare Professionals](#).

Human trafficking is considered a form of modern slavery and includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking is recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining someone for a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, pornography, or stripping. Labor trafficking is forced labor, including drug dealing, begging, or working long hours for little pay (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). Although human trafficking includes victims of any sex, age, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, children involved in child welfare,

including children who are in out-of-home care, are especially vulnerable (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018).

For more information, see Information Gateway's [Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation webpage](#) and [Definitions of Human Trafficking](#) publication.

Some people (typically certain types of professionals, such as teachers or physicians) are required by State laws to report child maltreatment under specific circumstances. Some States require all adults to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Individuals required to report maltreatment are called mandatory reporters. Information Gateway's [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#) discusses the laws that designate groups of professionals or individuals as mandatory reporters.

For information about where and how to file a report, contact your local child protective services agency or police department. Childhelp's National Child Abuse Hotline (800.4.A.CHILD) and its [website](#) offer crisis intervention, information, resources, and referrals to support services and provide assistance in more than 170 languages.

For information on what happens when suspected abuse or neglect is reported, read Information Gateway's [How the Child Welfare System Works](#).

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND WHEN TO REPORT

It is important to recognize high-risk situations and the signs and symptoms of maltreatment. If you suspect a child is being harmed, reporting your suspicions may protect them and help the family receive assistance. Any concerned person can report suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Reporting your concerns is not making an accusation; rather, it is a request for an investigation and assessment to determine if help is needed.

A child may directly disclose to you that they have experienced abuse or neglect. Childhelp's [Handling Child Abuse Disclosures](#) defines direct and indirect disclosure and provides tips for supporting the child.

While it's important to know the signs of physical, mental, and emotional abuse and neglect, which are provided later in this factsheet, the following signs of general maltreatment also can help determine whether a child needs help:

- Child
 - Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
 - Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
 - Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
 - Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen

- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Is reluctant to be around a particular person
- Discloses maltreatment
- Parent
 - Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home
 - Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
 - Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
 - Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
 - Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of the parent's emotional needs
 - Shows little concern for the child
- Parent and child
 - Touch or look at each other rarely
 - Consider their relationship entirely negative
 - State consistently they do not like each other

The preceding list is not a comprehensive list of the signs of maltreatment. It is important to pay attention to other behaviors that may seem unusual or concerning. Additionally, the presence of these signs does not necessarily mean that a child is being maltreated; there may be other causes. They are, however, indicators that others should be concerned

about the child's welfare, particularly when multiple signs are present or they occur repeatedly.

For more information, see Information Gateway's webpages on [Safety and Risk](#) and [Co-Occurring Factors](#).

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

A child who exhibits the following signs may be a victim of physical abuse:

- Has unexplained injuries, such as burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other noticeable marks after an absence from school
- Seems scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn, or aggressive
- Seems frightened of their parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Shows changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when a parent or other adult caregiver exhibits the following (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2018):

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury or provides an explanation that is not consistent with the injury
- Shows little concern for the child
- Sees the child as entirely bad, burdensome, or worthless
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abusing animals or pets

SIGNS OF NEGLECT

A child who exhibits the following signs may be a victim of neglect (Tracy, 2018a):

- Is frequently absent from school
- Beggings or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical care (including immunizations), dental care, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when a parent or other caregiver exhibits the following (Tracy, 2018b):

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

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

A child who exhibits the following signs may be a victim of sexual abuse (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology, 2014; Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network [RAINN], 2018a):

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Experiences bleeding, bruising, or swelling in their private parts
- Suddenly refuses to go to school
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite

- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when a parent or other caregiver exhibits the following (RAINN, 2018b):

- Tries to be the child's friend rather than assume an adult role
- Makes up excuses to be alone with the child
- Talks with the child about the adult's personal problems or relationships

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

A child who exhibits the following signs may be a victim of emotional maltreatment (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2016):

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as being overly compliant or demanding, extremely passive, or aggressive
- Is either inappropriately adult (e.g., parenting other children) or inappropriately infantile (e.g., frequently rocking or head-banging)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Shows signs of depression or suicidal thoughts
- Reports an inability to develop emotional bonds with others

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caregiver exhibits the following (Prevent Child Abuse America, 2016):

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Describes the child negatively
- Overtly rejects the child

The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Well-Being

Child abuse and neglect can have lifelong implications for victims, including on their well-being. While the physical wounds may heal, there are many long-term consequences of experiencing the trauma of abuse or neglect. A child or youth's ability to cope and thrive after trauma is called "resilience." With help, many of these children can work through and overcome their past experiences.

Children who are maltreated may be at risk of experiencing cognitive delays and emotional difficulties, among other issues, which can affect many aspects of their lives, including their academic outcomes and social skills development (Bick & Nelson, 2016). Experiencing childhood maltreatment also is a risk factor for depression, anxiety, and other psychiatric disorders (Fuller-Thomson, Baird, Dhrodia, & Brennenstuhl, 2016).

RESOURCES

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's factsheet, [What Is Child Traumatic Stress?](#), defines child traumatic stress and provides an overview of trauma, trauma signs and symptoms, and how trauma can impact children. Find more resources that strive to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families, and communities at the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web section, [About Child Abuse and Neglect](#), provides information on the prevalence, effects, and physical and mental consequences of child abuse and neglect, as well as additional resources and a comprehensive reference list.

Stop It Now! is a [website](#) that provides parents and other adults with resources to help prevent child sexual abuse. The site offers direct help to those with questions or concerns about child abuse, prevention advocacy, prevention education, and technical assistance and training.

The American Academy of Pediatrics gives pediatricians and other health-care providers the [resources](#) they need to more effectively identify, treat, and refer children and youth who have been maltreated as well as promotes the importance of resilience in how a child deals with traumatic stress.

Information Gateway has produced webpages and publications about child abuse and neglect:

- The [How to Report Child Abuse and Neglect webpage](#) provides information about mandatory reporting and how to report suspected maltreatment.
- Information Gateway also has several publications and webpages that cover understanding and preventing maltreatment:
 - [Prevention](#)
 - [Child Maltreatment and Brain Development: A Primer for Child Welfare Professionals](#)

The **CDC's** webpage, [Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect](#), provides resources and discusses the CDC's approach to prevention.

Prevent Child Abuse America is a [national organization](#) dedicated to providing information on child maltreatment and its prevention.

A list of organizations focused on child maltreatment prevention is available on Information Gateway's [State, Territory, and Tribal Resources webpage](#).

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

SOMEONE WHO IS BEING ABUSED OR NEGLECTED

Every child deserves a safe, loving family and to have his or her basic needs—such as food, clothing, and shelter—met. Most parents try their best to provide these things for their children, but unfortunately, not all parents do, and not all children are cared for and safe. Some children may not be safe because their parent or other caregiver (such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or babysitter) is harming them. Others may not be safe because there isn't a responsible adult to watch or take care of them. When children aren't safe because of what a parent or other caregiver does or doesn't do, this could be child abuse or neglect. This tip sheet will provide you with more information about what child abuse and neglect is, and what to do if you or a friend aren't safe.



WHAT'S INSIDE...

- **What is** child abuse or neglect?
- **How do I know** if someone is being abused or neglected?
- **What should I do** if someone is being abused or neglected?

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

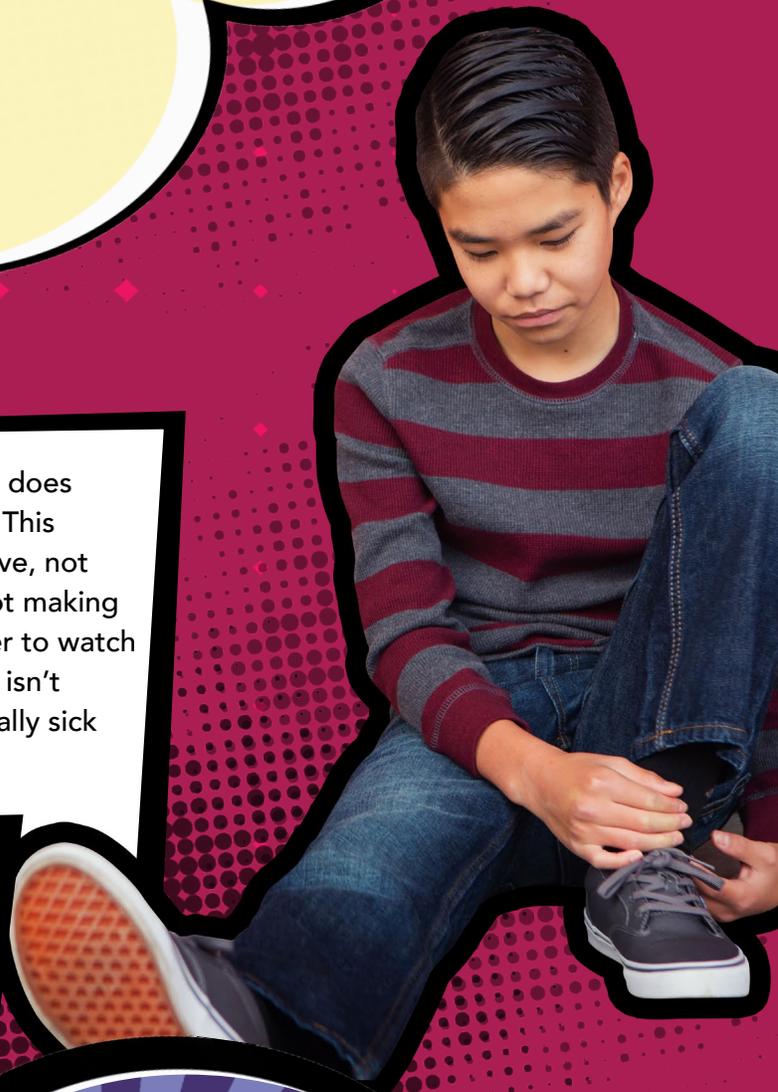
Child abuse or neglect is when a parent or other caregiver does something that harms—or will likely harm—a child. This also includes times when a parent or other caregiver fails to do things that will keep a child safe and healthy. Examples of child abuse and neglect are often organized into **four categories**:

- **Physical abuse** is when a parent or other caregiver seriously hurts or injures a child. This could include hitting a child with an object, burning a child, or in other ways purposely hurting a child. It doesn't include accidents, like if a parent tripped and fell on a child.

- **Neglect** is when a parent or other caregiver does not make sure a child's basic needs are met. This could include not providing a safe place to live, not providing enough food to stay healthy, or not making sure there is a trustworthy adult or babysitter to watch the child when the parent or other caregiver isn't home. It also could include not bringing a really sick child to the doctor.

- **Sexual abuse** is when a parent or other adult inappropriately touches a child or has a child inappropriately touch them. This includes touching "private" areas, but it also could include other things. For example, it could include the adult taking or showing sexually inappropriate photos or videos to a child.

- **Emotional abuse** is when a parent or other caregiver repeatedly puts down, makes fun of, threatens, ignores, or does other things that harm a child's emotional health.



HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE IS BEING ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?

It's often really hard—even for adults—to know if a child is being harmed. Sometimes we may see it happening with our own eyes, such as if we notice an adult hitting a child. But other times we may only see signs of what *could* be happening. These signs may mean a child is being hurt by an adult, but there could be other causes, too.

The list below gives a few signs that a child may be abused or neglected, but you should remember two things. First, a child who shows these signs may not necessarily be abused or neglected by an adult, but these signs may be reasons to be concerned and for you to talk with an adult. (This will be explained more later.) Second, this list is not complete. There are many other signs of abuse and neglect, too.

These are examples of signs a child may be abused or neglected or otherwise needs help:

- The child has injuries (bruises, burns, cuts, etc.) that he or she can't or won't explain, or the explanation doesn't make sense.
- The child is frightened of his or her parents or other adults.
- The child hurts pets or other animals.
- The child spends a lot of time at home without a parent or other caregiver (if the child is young).
- The child uses alcohol or drugs.
- The child avoids going home or spending time with a particular adult.
- The child often comes to school in dirty clothes.

Sometimes you also may just get a feeling that something isn't right about how a parent or other caregiver treats a child or how a friend is acting. If you are concerned about someone, you should talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, or school counselor. We'll explain more about that in the next section.

The child also may tell you he or she is being harmed. If someone does tell you he or she is being abused or neglected, **here are a few tips about how you can react:**

- Listen to what the child has to say.
- Tell the child you care and want to help.
- Let the child know he or she is not alone.
- Let the child know what is happening is not his or her fault.
- Encourage the child to talk to a trusted adult to get help.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE IS BEING ABUSED OR NEGLECTED?

If you suspect or know that a child is being abused or neglected, there are ways you can help. If you or someone else is in immediate and serious danger, you should call 911. In other cases, you can find a trusted adult to talk with. **You don't need to be 100 percent sure that a child is being abused or neglected to talk with someone.** You should share your worries, and the adult can help determine what to do next. You also can encourage the child to talk to a trusted adult.

Many times, there is a trusted adult already in your life—such as a parent, teacher, school counselor, or coach—whom you can approach. You can tell this trusted adult what your concerns are or what you've witnessed. Give a complete, honest description of what you know. This may be a difficult conversation to have, but remember the reason you're having it: to keep someone (maybe you) safe. The adult can help figure out what can be done.

Some children and youth may not have an adult whom they trust enough to talk with about their concerns, or they may have told an adult who does not believe them. In this case, there are national and local hotlines they can call for help. The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline has counselors available 24 hours every day to talk with children and adults about abuse and neglect. To reach a Childhelp counselor, call or text **1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)**. For more information or to live chat with a counselor, visit the **[Childhelp website](#)**.



OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE

Here are answers to other questions that might come up in these situations:

Isn't telling someone else just tattling or snitching?

No. There's a big difference between *telling* someone about a child who is being hurt and *tattling*. Children usually tattle to get another child in trouble for not following a rule. Telling someone about abuse or neglect—or even bullying—is about keeping a child safe. You aren't tattling when you report abuse or neglect to someone.

What will happen after I tell someone?

After you talk with a trusted adult or call a hotline, that person may contact a local agency, often called child protective services, or CPS. The workers at CPS are trained to help make sure that children and families are safe. When they receive a call, CPS workers review the information and figure out if they need to investigate. If so, they may talk with the family, the child, or others to help determine what's making the child unsafe. CPS workers can help parents or other caregivers get services, education, or other assistance so they can learn to better care for their children in their own homes. If a child is in danger at that moment or has been seriously hurt by a parent or other caregiver, the CPS worker may need to have the child stay with another relative or in foster care, which is a temporary home for the child to live. In these situations, the CPS worker will work with the family so that the child can return to live with the parent or other caregiver when CPS determines they will be safe and properly treated.

Will I get in trouble for telling someone?

If you're being honest about what you've noticed, you won't get in trouble, even if the child was not actually being abused or neglected. You don't have to be absolutely sure about whether a child is being abused or neglected when you talk with someone about your concerns. You told someone because you really thought the child was in danger. However, if someone purposely lies to CPS when reporting abuse or neglect, they could get in trouble.

Will the other child get upset with me for telling someone else?

Children often tell each other secrets, or you may see or hear something that was supposed to be a secret. A friend or classmate may tell you they are being harmed and ask you not to tell anyone. When a child is being harmed, this is a secret that must be shared, and telling a trusted adult is the right move. It's possible the child could be upset you told, but he or she is probably feeling a lot of different emotions at that time. The child may feel scared because he or she is being hurt. The child may feel ashamed or embarrassed that someone else knows about what happened. The child may be confused because someone he or she cares about is harming them. The child may feel guilty because he or she told someone else about "family business." All these feelings are normal, but you should still tell someone. By talking with a trusted adult, you are showing the child that you care, and it could lead to the family getting help to keep everyone safe.

Why do parents abuse or neglect their children?

There are many reasons why a parent or other caregiver may abuse or neglect a child, but no matter what, it's never the child's fault. Adults who hurt children may have trouble controlling their anger. They also may not know about children's needs or have unrealistic expectations about how children grow and develop (for example, thinking a baby should be potty trained by age 1). Adults also may have problems—such as using drugs or having mental health issues—that affect how they make decisions. Of course, there are many other reasons an adult may abuse or neglect a child, and not every parent who has the problems mentioned here will harm their children. No matter the reason an adult harms a child, it is important that the family receives help to make sure it stops.

TOP TAKEAWAYS



1 Every child deserves a safe, loving family and to have his or her basic needs—such as food, clothing, and shelter—met.

2 Child abuse or neglect is when a parent or other caregiver does something that harms—or will likely harm—a child or when a parent or other caregiver fails to do things that will keep a child safe and healthy.

3 Help is available. If you or someone else is in immediate and serious danger, you should call 911. In other cases, find a trusted adult to talk with. You can also call or text the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)**.

4 Telling someone about abuse or neglect—or even bullying—is about keeping a child safe. You aren't tattling when you tell someone about abuse or neglect.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). *How you can help someone who is being abused or neglected*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/how-you-can-help-someone-who-being-abused-or-neglected/>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau



Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect - Alaska

1. [Home](#)
2. [Resources](#)
3. Mandatory Reporting Child Abuse And Neglect Alaska

Date: May 2023

Professionals Required to Report

Citation: Alaska Stat. §§ 47.17.020; 47.17.023; 47.17.024

The following persons are required to report:

- Health practitioners or administrative officers of institutions
- Teachers and school administrators, including athletic coaches, of public and private schools
- Child care providers
- Paid employees of domestic violence and sexual assault programs, crisis intervention and prevention programs, or organizations that provide counseling or treatment to individuals seeking to control their use of drugs or alcohol
- Peace officers or officers of the Department of Corrections
- Persons who process or produce visual or printed matter, either privately or commercially
- Members of a child fatality review team or the multidisciplinary child protection team
- Volunteers who interact with children in a public or private school for more than 4 hours a week
- Juvenile probation officers, juvenile probation office staff, and staff of juvenile detention facilities and juvenile treatment facilities
- A practitioner of the healing arts involved in the delivery or care of an infant

Training Requirements for Mandatory Reporters

Citation: Alaska Stat. § 47.17.022

Each department of the State and school district that employs persons required to report abuse or neglect of children shall provide the following:

- Initial training to each new employee within 45 days after the first day of employment and to any existing employee who has not received equivalent training
- Appropriate in-service training as determined by the department or school district

Each department and school district shall develop a training curriculum that acquaints its employees with the following:

- Laws relating to child abuse and neglect
- Techniques for recognition and detection of child abuse and neglect
- Agencies and organizations within the State that offer aid or shelter to victims and the families of victims of child abuse or neglect
- Procedures for required notification of suspected abuse or neglect
- The role of a person required to report child abuse or neglect and the employing agency after

the report has been made

- A brief description of the manner in which cases of child abuse or neglect are investigated by the department and law enforcement agencies after a report of suspected abuse or neglect

Each department and school district that must comply with this section shall file a current copy of its training curriculum and materials with the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. A department or school district may seek the technical assistance of the council or the Department of Family and Community Services in the development of its training program.

Each school district that provides training under this section shall provide notice to public and private schools located in the school district of the availability of the training and invite volunteers who are required to report abuse or neglect of children to participate in the training at no cost to the volunteer.

The Office of Children's Services provides information about reporting requirements at [Report Child Abuse in Alaska](#).

Reporting by Other Persons

Citation: Alaska Stat. § 47.17.020

Mandated reporters may report cases that come to their attention in their nonoccupational capacities. Any other person may report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been harmed.

Institutional Responsibility to Report

Citation: Alaska Stat. § 47.17.020(g)

A person required to report child abuse or neglect who makes the report to the person's job supervisor or to another individual working for the entity that employs the person is not relieved of the obligation to make the report to the Department of Family and Community Services as required by law.

Standards for Making a Report

Citation: Alaska Stat. §§ 47.17.020; 47.17.023; 47.17.024

A report must be made when, in the performance of their occupational or appointed duties, a reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm resulting from abuse or neglect.

A person providing—either privately or commercially—film, photo, visual, printed-matter processing, production, or finishing services; or computer installation, repair, or other services; or internet or cellular telephone services; who in the process of providing those services observes a film, photo, picture, computer file, image, or other matter and has reasonable cause to suspect that the film, photo, picture, computer file, image, or other matter visually depicts a child engaged in conduct described in § 11.41.455(a) (sexual exploitation of a minor or child pornography) shall immediately report the observation to the nearest law enforcement agency.

A practitioner of the healing arts involved in the delivery or care of an infant who the practitioner determines has been adversely affected by, or is withdrawing from exposure to, a controlled substance or alcohol shall immediately notify the nearest office of the department of the infant's condition.

Privileged Communications

Citation: Alaska Stat. § 47.17.060

Neither the physician-patient nor the spousal privilege is recognized.

Inclusion of the Reporter's Name in the Report

The reporter is not specifically required by statute to provide their name in the report.

Disclosure of the Reporter's Identity

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

INFORMATION PACKET QUESTIONNAIRE

Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse and Neglect

1.0 Credit

NAME: _____ PHONE NO.: _____

Only one person per questionnaire. Feel free to make additional copies if needed.

ADDRESS: _____
Street or Post Office City/State Zip

EMAIL: _____

YES! I would like to receive ACRF email. *(Includes Training Tracks Newsletter, training reminders and community events or training of interest for Resource Families)*

Are you a foster parent? YES NO If YES, what is your Foster Home License #: _____

If NO, please check one: Pending Foster Parent OCS Birth Parent Adoptive Parent

Residential Treatment Facility (License #: _____) Agency: _____

Other *(please specify)*: _____

Please read the information packet. Then fill out this questionnaire and RETURN TO: ACRF, 3429 Airport Way, Suite 202A, Fairbanks, AK 99709. Or email to acrf@nwresource.org or fax it to: 907-290-8765.

1. This information packet presents concepts and ideas that may be useful to your foster parenting experience. Please list two (2) specific ideas or concepts that you learned or reaffirmed from reading this booklet. Write a short sentence or two describing how you can use them in your family.

a)

b)

Please see reverse side

INFORMATION PACKET QUESTIONNAIRE

2. List each title in this packet. In a few sentences, summarize the main purpose or key points for each section in this booklet:

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