



INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AND PREVENTION

Each and every one of us has a role to play in protecting children from abuse and neglect. To help keep children safe, you should:

- understand the definitions of child abuse and neglect,
- recognize the warning signs of child maltreatment,
- report suspected child abuse and neglect, and
- reach out to children and parents in your community.

DEFINITIONS AND RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Child abuse is any act that endangers a child's physical or emotional health and development.
- Child abuse and neglect often take place in the home. The child often knows the abuser well – a parent, relative, babysitter, or friend of the family.
- Child abuse and neglect cross all ethnic, racial, social, and economic lines.

THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF CHILD MALTREATMENT.

- Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including physical, educational, and emotional needs.
- Physical abuse is physical injury as a result of hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or otherwise harming a child.
- Sexual abuse may include indecent exposure, fondling, rape, or commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.
- Emotional abuse is any pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth, including constant criticism, threats, and rejection.
- Many children experience more than one type of maltreatment. For instance, a physically abused child is often emotionally abused as well.

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Although children react differently to abuse and neglect, there are common signs of child maltreatment. One sign alone might not indicate child abuse or neglect, but when the signs appear repeatedly or in combination, there should be greater scrutiny of the situation. The following may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

Indicators in the child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Is fearful, especially of parents
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something 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- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn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 wary of adult contact or typical family affection
- Considers relationship with parent(s) entirely negative

Indicators in the parent:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Mentions homicidal thoughts/feelings toward the child
- Talks about extensive disciplining of the child and asks others to use harsh discipline if the child misbehaves
- Has unrealistic expectations of the child
- Sees the child as bad, worthless, or out of control
- Is unable/unwilling to meet the child's basic needs and provide a safe environment
- Considers relationship with the child entirely negative

REPORTING AND PREVENTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Usually, children will not talk directly about abuse or neglect. Children may:

- be afraid they or someone they love will suffer harm if the maltreatment is disclosed,
- have promised not to tell,
- be embarrassed or ashamed, or
- not have the necessary vocabulary to explain the events.

Instead of talking specifically about abuse or neglect, children may disclose maltreatment through indirect hints or by mentioning someone they know who has been hurt or has caused harm. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, it is important to:

- LISTEN to the child without giving your opinion or asking leading questions;
- Tell the child that you believe him/her and are happy that he/she told you;
- Reassure the child that he/she did not do anything wrong;
- Tell the child that you will do your best to keep him/her safe;
- Give yourself time to think, and seek help from professionals; and
- Take any disclosure of abuse seriously, and report it. In Solano County, call 1-800-544-8696.
- Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Reporting suspected abuse and neglect is critical to protecting children and getting their families help. Although it may feel difficult, frightening, or uncomfortable to make a report, doing so could save a child's life, stop physical injury, prevent further abuse or neglect, or allow families to receive resources or services they need.

You do not need evidence or actual knowledge of child maltreatment to make a report, but instead, need to have a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect. Once there is a report, child welfare professionals commence an investigation and support the child and family.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, contact your local child welfare agency. In Solano County, make a confidential report anytime by calling the hotline at: 1-800-544-8696