

Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

What is child abuse? Child abuse is when someone, whether through action or failing to act, causes injury, death, emotional harm, or risk of serious harm to a child.

In 2019 there were **656,000** victims of child abuse*

On average **5 CHILDREN DIE** each day from child abuse* #fivetoomany



PHYSICAL ABUSE

- bruises, burns, cuts
- broken bones
- internal injuries, brain damage
- fear of parent/caregiver



EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- delays in development
- illnesses like ulcers, skin disorders
- anxiety, depression
- social isolation



SEXUAL ABUSE

- difficulty sitting, walking
- bleeding or bruises near genital area
- depression, eating disorders
- decline in school performance



CHILD NEGLECT

- low weight or height for age
- poor hygiene, inadequate clothing
- untreated medical problems
- struggling in school, often tired



BULLYING

- unexplained injuries
- hesitant to go to school
- lost or damaged possessions
- loss of friendships, low self-esteem



ONLINE ABUSE

- reluctant to discuss online activity
- depression or low self-esteem
- unexplained messages from strangers
- explicit content on devices

RISK FACTORS & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Risk factors increase the potential for abuse. Protective factors decrease the potential for abuse.



RISK FACTORS

- special needs
- family history of abuse/neglect
- substance abuse
- mental health issues
- social isolation



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- supportive environments
- parental employment
- good coping skills
- child monitoring
- child abuse prevention education, like Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe (www.speakupbesafe.org)

In case of emergency call **911**

Questions? Not sure where to turn?
TEXT • CHAT • CALL
24 hrs/day, 7days/week

**CHILDHELP NATIONAL
CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE**
1-800-4-A-CHILD
childhelphotline.org



SIGNS OF Physical Child Abuse

Physical child abuse is any non-accidental physical injury to a child.

RISK FACTORS

- abuser was abused as child
- substance abuse
- community violence
- stress in the home
- mental health issues

20-30%

of adults report physical abuse in their own childhood.

SIGNS IN PARENT/ CAREGIVER

- history of violence and/or abuse
- can't or won't explain child's injuries
- critical, aggressive toward child
- delays/prevents medical care for child
- keeps child isolated

Physical abuse was involved in **673** child abuse fatalities in 2019.

PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- bruises, burns, cuts, broken bones, sprains, dislocated joints
- injuries at different stages of healing or with distinctive shapes
- unexplained injuries
- internal injuries, brain damage
- frequency and history of injuries (e.g., after weekends, vacations)

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- wears long sleeves out of season
- afraid of certain adults or going with them
- withdrawn, depressed, anxious
- self-destructive, acts out, aggressive
- violent themes in play, artwork, etc.
- reports severe discipline

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

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SIGNS OF Emotional Child Abuse

Emotional child abuse involves harming a child's mental and social development.

RISK FACTORS

- community violence
- social isolation
- family history of abuse
- substance abuse

More than **1 in 3** adults report emotional abuse in their own childhood.

SIGNS IN PARENT/ CAREGIVER

- rejecting or ignoring child
- playing favorites
- constantly criticizing child
- poor anger management
- stormy relationships
- disrespect for authority

PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- development delays
- speech disorders
- wetting bed or pants
- unexplained health issues
- weight fluctuation

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- developing habits like sucking, biting
- doing poorly in school
- overly compliant or defensive
- very emotional or aggressive
- depressed

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SIGNS OF Sexual Child Abuse

Sexual child abuse is an adult or older/stronger youth using a child for sexual gratification (contact or non-contact).

RISK FACTORS

- loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, disability
- lack of parental supervision
- troubled or shifting family relationships
- stress in the home
- substance abuse

SIGNS IN PARENT/ CAREGIVER

- jealous, possessive
- fails to supervise child
- has troubled sexual relationships
- relies on child for emotional support

More than **1 in 9** adults report sexual abuse in their own childhood.

PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- difficulty sitting/walking, bowel problems
- bleeding, bruises, pain of genital area
- sexually transmitted disease
- eating disorders, weight fluctuation
- decline in school performance

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- anxiety, nightmares, low self-esteem
- neuroses, inexplicable illness
- sexual knowledge beyond own age
- substance abuse
- withdrawn, self-destructive, suicidal

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SIGNS OF Child Neglect

Child neglect occurs when a responsible party does not provide a child with needed care, supervision, affection, and support.

RISK FACTORS

- parent lacks understanding of child’s needs
- substance abuse, mental health issues
- stress in the home, unlawful behaviors
- lack of resources
- physical disability

SIGNS IN PARENT/ CAREGIVER

- indifferent or uncaring toward child
- depression, apathy, drug/alcohol abuse, mental health issues
- denies problems with child or blames the child for problems
- views child negatively
- relies on child for own care and well-being

More than **60%** of child abuse involves neglect.

PHYSICAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- clothing that is dirty, wrong size, or not right for weather
- very low body weight, height for age
- hygiene problems, body odor
- untreated medical and dental problems

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS IN CHILD

- seeks or stockpiles food
- often tired, sleepy, listless
- talks about caring for siblings, lack of caregiver at home
- truancy, frequent changes of school

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SIGNS OF Bullying

Bullying (physical, social, or verbal) is repeated, targeted, aggressive behavior, often by youth with more power, or by an adult.

Around **20%** of students report being bullied.

RISK FACTORS

Youth Who Bullies

- mistreated at home
- low parental involvement
- view aggression as positive

Youth Who Is Bullied

- perceived as different, unpopular, weak
- anxious, depressed, or have low-esteem

Both

- may lack emotional regulation
- youth who are bullied may also bully

SIGNS A YOUTH IS BULLYING

- aggressive physically and/or verbally
- blames others for their problems
- may feel superior to others, be part of a clique
- concerned about status and reputation
- has unexplained new possession or extra money

SIGNS A YOUTH IS BULLIED

- unexplainable injuries
- lost or damaged clothing, possessions reluctant to attend school or social events
- self-destructive, frequently ill
- loss of friends, trouble sleeping

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SIGNS OF Online Child Abuse

Online abuse, or cyberabuse, is aggressive or predatory behavior that takes place online or on digital devices. It includes cyberbullying, which is similar to bullying but done online, social apps, and text/email. It also includes predators who groom kids online for exploitation.

RISK FACTORS

- lack of parental supervision
- isolated, needful of attention
- physical, mental, developmental disabilities
- lacking healthy relationships

SIGNS IN PARENT/ CAREGIVER

- hides screen from others, has secret accounts
- is online excessively, upset when denied access
- takes excessive interest in kids and their activities
- sends gifts to children

ONLINE GROOMING

Online grooming can lead to exploiting the child online and/or in person through pornography, sex trafficking, etc.

Grooming Includes

- targeting a child, gaining trust and access
- isolating child, becoming a secret friend
- desensitizing with sexual talk, images
- getting private info/images
- controlling through fear

Signs A Child Is Being Groomed

- secret online accounts, activities
- sexual knowledge beyond their age
- sharing personal information with strangers
- suggestive selfies on their device(s)

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