



Maltreatment Definition

Child abuse is defined as any willful act, or threatened act, that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm, that causes, or is likely to cause, the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child. Neglect occurs when a child is deprived of, or is allowed to be deprived of, necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment, or a child is permitted to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired, or to be in danger of being significantly impaired.

Maltreatment Indicators

	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Multiple and/or unexplained bruises in different stages of healing » Welts, human bite marks, bald spots » Burns that cannot be explained » Unexplained fractures or other injuries » Untreated injuries & medical needs not treated » Wears clothes not suited to the weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Nervous, withdrawn, clingy, tries to please caregiver » Hostile, aggressive, violent, self-destructive » Complaints of soreness/physical or psychosomatic illness » Injury and explanation of injury do not match » Fearful of parent, going home, or adult contact » Shows little or no emotion when hurt » Excessive absences
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Torn, stained or bloody undergarments » Genital pain, swelling, or itching » Difficulty walking or sitting » Genital or anal bruising or bleeding » Sexually transmitted diseases » Frequent urinary track or yeast infections » Pain when urinating or passing stool » Unexplained abdominal pain » Vaginal or penile discharge <p><i>*Physical indicators present less than 5-10%</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Withdrawn, depressed, threatened by physical contact » Premature knowledge of sex, seductive behavior » Sexual acting out, excessive masturbation » Low self-esteem, lack of confidence » Sudden change in weight » Change or decrease in school performance » Uncontrolled emotions, secrecy » Anxiety, sleep difficulties, nightmares, and/or other fears » Regressed behaviors (speech, bedwetting) » Adolescent: self-mutilation, eating disorders, promiscuity
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Delayed physical or cognitive development » Speech difficulties or disorders » Habit disorders (sucking, rocking, biting) » Eating disorders, ulcers » Flat affect » Hair loss » Failure to thrive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Demanding, needy, attention-seeking, overly compliant » Extreme temper tantrums, oppositional, destructive » Delinquent or criminal activity » Unfriendly, distant, poor peer-relations » Anxiety, sleep disorders » Low self esteem, depressed, suicidal
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Abandonment; Lack of adult supervision » Untreated lice, medical, or dental needs » Constantly hungry, underweight » Malnourished » Poor hygiene – constantly dirty » Failure to thrive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Fatigue/listlessness » Constantly tired, sleep disorders » Steals or begs for food » Conduct disorders » Excessive absenteeism/tardiness » Extremely needy, rejected, isolated » Poor social and/or communication skills » Delayed growth and motor development » Learning disabilities





A Note About Maltreatment Indicators

The warning signs of child abuse and neglect vary from child to child. Children have different ways of coping with abuse, and signs often depend on the child's characteristics and environment. In reviewing the signs of abuse, it is important to note that signs are not limited to one type of child abuse or neglect, and sometimes, different types of abuse and/or neglect occur in combination. It is also important to remember the presence of these indicators does not prove abuse is occurring, but rather MIGHT indicate abuse is occurring.

Child Maltreatment

- » 3.3 million referrals (estimated) were received by U.S. Child Protection agencies during fiscal year 2009
- » Of these referrals, 61.9% were accepted for a response by those agencies
- » Neglect is the most common type of abuse, followed by physical, and sexual abuse
- » 78.3% suffered neglect
- » 17.8% suffered physical abuse
- » 9.5% suffered sexual abuse
- » 7.6% suffered from psychological maltreatment

Age of Victims

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| » <1 Year 12.6% | » <1 – 3 years = 33.4% |
| » 1 Year 7.4% | » 4 -7 = 23.3% |
| » 2 Years 7.0% | » 8 – 11 years = 18.8% |
| » 3 Years 6.4% | » Total 0 – 11 years = 75.5% |

Perpetrator Relationship

- » 80.9% were parents
- » 6.3% were relatives other than parents
- » 4.3% were unmarried partners
- » 3.9% were of an "other" relationship
- » 2.8% were of an unknown relationship
- » < 1% each: Childcare provider, Legal guardian, Foster parent, Friends and neighbors, Other professional, Other relative, Group home staff

Child Maltreatment 2009 presents national data about child abuse and neglect known to CPS agencies in the US during Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2009. The data were collected and analyzed through the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), which is supported by the Children's Bureau.

Consequences of Abuse/Neglect and Victimization

Children who suffer from physical abuse and/or neglect, in addition to physical injuries and/or behavioral and emotional consequences, experience increased cognitive delays, impaired development, and poor academic achievement. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study found that early exposure to adverse childhood experiences, which include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect; violence; household dysfunction; parental substance abuse or mental illness; and an absent parent, are strong predictors of later health problems and early mortality. These studies found that the more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of health and social problems as an adult, including risk-taking behaviors and a shortened life span. In addition to the consequences to children, there are also long-term impacts to society. Child maltreatment costs the U.S. about \$80 billion in direct and indirect costs each year, or \$220 million each day.

Adverse Childhood Experiences – Centers For Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/ace

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2008) Long-term consequences of abuse and neglect. Retrieved from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/impact/longterm>

*Trickett, P. K., & McBride-Chang, C. (1995). The developmental impact of different forms of child abuse and neglect. *Developmental Review* 15, 311-337 <http://www.preventchildabuse.org/research/child-abuse-and-neglect-statistics-a-facts>*





Risk Factors for Abuse/Neglect

The warning signs of child abuse and neglect vary and will manifest differently in each child, however risk factors also exist that indicate the potential of abuse and neglect. Parents, guardians, teachers, professionals, and bystanders all have the responsibility to keep children safe. Being aware of potential risk factors for abuse can help with both the identification and prevention of abuse/neglect.

Child	Parent or Caregiver/Family	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Special needs » Gifted » Infant with feeding difficulties or colic » Hyperactive » Unwanted or wrong sex » Difficult conception or birth » Medically fragile » Demanding/needy/clingy » Previous victim of abuse or other trauma/maltreatment » Premature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Substance Abuse/Mental Illness/Depression » Family disorganization or chaos » Domestic Violence » Family social isolation » Poor parenting skills » Adolescent or single parent » Parental low self-esteem » Parental expectations are inappropriate for child » Financial stress (poverty, job loss, lack of housing) » Low income » Family history of abuse » Inadequate supervision/abandonment » Belittling, harsh, or corporal punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supports corporal punishment » Lack of family support » Lack of resources » Denial of abuse » Legislative policies not supportive of families » Poor response by criminal justice system

Disclosure of Abuse/Neglect

If a child discloses abuse or neglect, please act responsibly.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Recognize that hints may be the start of a disclosure (children often test you before disclosing abuse) » Tell the child you believe them » Remain calm and supportive » Listen and allow the child to tell you what happened in their own words » Tell the child that you are glad they told you » Tell the child that it was not their fault » Use the child's vocabulary when addressing them and when reporting » Document direct quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Show shock or disgust » Make promises (ex. "I won't tell" or "abuse will stop") » <u>Ask WHY!</u> Use open-ended, reflective questions, such as "tell me more" » Be critical or judgmental of the offender; Children are protective of people they care about, even if they are abusive » Try and "rescue" or "cure" the family on your own, especially in lieu of reporting » Rely on any other person or agency to report

Witnessing Abuse/Neglect

If you witness abuse or neglect, there are effective ways to respond.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Remain calm and supportive » Try to distract the child » Empathize with the parent and/or offer help » Notify the store manager if you are in public » Make a report to DCF if you have a license plate number or any other identifying information » Call 911 & report the location if the child is in immediate danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Show shock or disgust » Stare at the parent or give dirty looks » Belittle the parent » Assume it's "none of your business" » Rely on someone else to intervene » Intervene in a hostile situation which may be dangerous to you





Reporting Abuse/Neglect

We know most abuse is not reported. People are often afraid to get involved in others' business and often ask themselves, "What if I am wrong?" or "What if it is not abuse?" They are often afraid of the consequences of reporting. There may also be denial involved, a lack of education about what abuse is, fear, or there may be an economic reason for a family member not reporting.

Emotional abuse is almost never reported because people are not sure emotional abuse is technically abuse; in general people are not certain what constitutes abuse. It is important to note all forms of abuse are underreported. Sexual abuse is also considered a form frequently underreported because of the shame and feelings of guilt and secrecy associated with it. Male victims especially may not want to report the crime, and older victims may not want to report a crime that happened years or decades ago. Also, some individuals or families do not report due to privacy and/or cultural issues.

However, in most states, either all adults, or at a minimum, certain professionals, are required by law to report child abuse and neglect. Whether required or not, every adult should report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to their state child welfare agency. Parents, guardians, teachers, professionals, and bystanders all have a responsibility to keep children safe. By observing the behaviors and interactions of children at home, at school, and with their friends, knowing the warning signs and possible indicators of abuse, and reporting any suspicions of abuse or neglect, you can help keep children safe.

To find your state's agency and contact information, visit www.childwelfare.org/organizations. In Florida, every citizen is a mandatory reporter. If you suspect abuse, please call the Florida Abuse Hotline to make a report at 1-800-96-Abuse/22873.

For more information about the reporting process visit Florida Department of Child and Family Services at <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/abuse/>

Conclusion

Abuse is preventable. Both reporting and education prevent abuse. Reporting abuse stops abuse in two ways. It stops the child victim from being victimized again, and it prevents other children from being victimized by that same perpetrator in the future. Educating and empowering children and adults also prevents abuse. A significant feature of *MBF Child Safety Matters™* is to educate students before abuse occurs (primary prevention). The program is also effective as a secondary prevention program, as many children have disclosed abuse to a teacher, school counselor, or another adult after receiving the program.

You cannot stop abuse if you refuse to see its existence, and you cannot prevent abuse by waiting until it occurs. We need to turn "reaction" into "real action." We know the problem exists. Now we must resolve that children's lives, and our efforts, are valuable enough to combat it. Awareness + Action = Prevention!

Visit www.mbfchildsafetymatters.org for additional resources, and download our mobile app, "Child Safety Matters," free from the App store and Google Play.

Every child deserves to be safe!

