

# Family Times

## NEWSLETTER



NEWSLETTER FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN AGES 5-8

VOL. 2 / NO. 6

### Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect can affect children of all ages, races, and incomes. Most parents don't abuse or neglect their children on purpose. Some parents were abused themselves. They may be very young or inexperienced, or they may be under stress. Parents using alcohol and drugs are more likely to abuse or neglect their children.

Child abuse falls into four areas: physical abuse, physical or emotional neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

Child abuse and neglect are described as:

- Any action or failure to act that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, or sexual abuse
- An action or failure to act that presents an immediate risk of serious harm

It's not okay to hurt a child. Abused children are not invisible. They are in schools, churches, and grocery stores. Having a caring adult in their lives may help these children be successful. Strong communities and access to health care may also be protective factors to help them meet life's challenges.

### Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

Many warning signs may point to child abuse. The presence of a sign does not prove that child abuse is occurring. When signs appear repeatedly

or together, the situation requires a closer look.

Shaken baby syndrome may be recognized by vomiting, concussion, breathing problems, seizures, and death. Never shake a baby in anger or even in play such as bouncing them on a knee or throwing them up into the air.

Here are some warning signs that may point to child abuse.

#### The child:

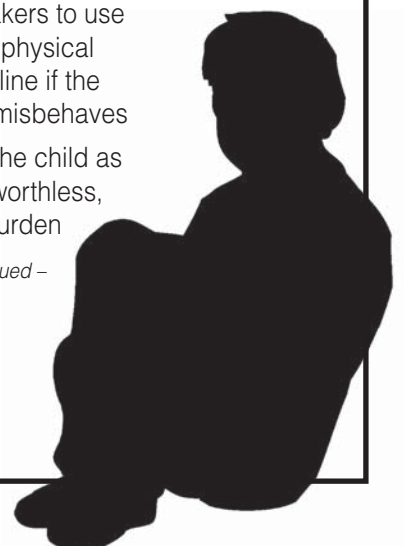
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises after a school absence
- Appears fearful at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Is often dirty with body odor
- Lacks proper clothing for weather
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Says there is no one at home
- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Has sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems
- Lacks concentration or has learning problems not related to physical or psychological causes

- Is always watchful and waiting for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly obedient, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Reports nightmares and bed-wetting
- Has a sudden change in appetite
- Displays bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or other adult

#### The parent:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Denies the existence of – or blames the child for – problems at school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as bad, worthless, or a burden

– continued –





## The Book Nook

*Trouble with Secrets* by Karen Johnsen

- Demands physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or drugs
- Is overly protective and strictly limits the child's contact with other children, especially those of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

### The parent and child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship negative
- State that they do not like each other

### Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect may affect physical, mental, and emotional development. These children may score lower than average on thinking ability, language development, and academic achievement.

Children may show signs of hyperactivity, sleep disturbances, anxiety, behavior disorders, or learning and memory difficulties. Because of isolation and fear, they may be unable to trust adults.

Physical injuries may or may not be visible. These range from minor bruises or cuts to severe injuries that may result in death.

Depression, suicide attempts, and other mental disorders are often diagnosed in many children and young adults who have been abused or neglected. Teens may have social problems. Twenty-five percent are more likely to experience delinquency, teen pregnancy, lower grades in school, drug use, and mental health problems. There is also an increased likelihood of adult criminal behavior and violent crime.

Abused children are more likely to smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, and take illegal drugs. As many as two-thirds of the people in drug treatment programs report being abused as children.

It is estimated that as many as one-third of adults who were abused and neglected as children will harm their own children.

Not all children will experience long-term consequences depending on the child's age, type of abuse, severity of abuse/neglect, and the relationship with their abuser.

Costs of maintaining the systems of child welfare, judicial, law enforcement, and health for abused and neglected children are high. Long-term costs for communities include criminal activity, substance abuse, and domestic violence in families.

### Contact List

Report Child Abuse: Childhelp USA  
Phone: 800-4-A-CHILD  
(800-422-4453)

Missing/Abducted Children: Child Find of America, 800-I-AM-LOST  
(800-426-5678)

Youth Crisis Hotline: 800-HIT-HOME  
(800-448-4663)

### To Make a Difference

- Be a nurturing parent – let children know they are loved.
- Help a friend, neighbor, or relative – offer relief by watching their children.
- Help yourself – take time out; don't take it out on a child.
- Stay calm if your baby cries – NEVER shake a baby.
- Get involved – help your community meet families' needs.
- Help to develop parenting resources – distribute them through libraries or directly to the public.
- Promote school programs – educate children and parents on abuse topics.
- Don't tolerate children's exposure to violent movies, games, and TV.
- Volunteer for local child abuse programs – donate your time or money.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect.
- Be ready in an emergency when you believe a child is being, or is about to be, physically or verbally abused – ask if you can help in any way; perhaps you could carry some packages or play with an older child so the baby can be fed or changed.
- Start at home – review your own parenting skills.

### References

Child Abuse and Neglect General Information Packet ([http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/can\\_info\\_packet.pdf](http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/can_info_packet.pdf)).

Prevent Child Abuse America ([http://preventchildabuse.org/learn\\_more/parents/recognizing\\_abuse.pdf](http://preventchildabuse.org/learn_more/parents/recognizing_abuse.pdf)).



This issue was written by Nila Cobb, Cabell County WVU Extension Agent, and Carol Winland, WVU Extension Assistant Professor Emerita. To contact Nila: (304) 743-7131; [Nila.Cobb@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Nila.Cobb@mail.wvu.edu). To contact Carol: (304) 290-9317; [CWinland@mail.wvnet.edu](mailto:CWinland@mail.wvnet.edu). Programs and activities offered by the West Virginia University Extension Service are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, and marital or family status. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Director, Cooperative Extension Service, West Virginia University.

ES06-20