



**Prevent Child Abuse
Minnesota**

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is any maltreatment of a child that results in harm or injury. Child abuse includes:

Physical abuse – an injury to a child that is not an accident; for example, hurting a child by hitting, burning, biting, or shaking.

Sexual abuse – any sexual contact with a child, including exhibitionism, photographs or films, or prostitution.

Physical neglect – failure to give the child food, clothing, medical care, shelter, or supervision.

Emotional abuse and neglect – an abusive parent may scare a child by threatening to leave him or her, or may be severely critical. A neglectful parent may not spend any time with the child or may never show the child any affection. A neglectful parent may not provide enough food or medical attention.

Know the warning signs of abuse

Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs. Please pay attention to the treatment of children around you. You may be a child's only lifeline to safety. Child abuse is everyone's business. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call child protection services in your Minnesota County (see Resource Section) or call 1-800-CHILDREN to speak with someone at Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota.

General signs are present in children who seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- Reluctant to go home (for example, coming to school early or staying late)
- Very passive and withdrawn – or aggressive and disruptive
- Tired a lot or complaining of nightmares or insomnia
- Fearful and anxious
- To show sudden changes in behavior or school performance

Some signs of physical abuse

- Unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes, and other injuries
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

Some signs of sexual abuse

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for age
- Running away from home

Some signs of physical neglect

- Missing school a lot
- Begging/stealing money or food
- Lacking needed medical or dental care
- Being frequently dirty
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them

Some signs of emotional abuse and neglect

- Acting overly mature or immature for age
- Extreme changes in behavior
- Delays in physical or emotional development
- Attempted suicide
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent

Also, know the signs of an abusive adult. Consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caretaker:

- Seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home
- Denies problems at school or at home, or blames the child for them
- Sees the child as worthless or as a burden
- Avoids discussing the child's injuries or gives conflicting explanations for them
- Seems isolated from other parents, and school and community activities
- Uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it
- Depends on the child for emotional support
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- Seems indifferent to the child
- Seems secretive or tries to isolate the children from other children
- Frequently blames, belittles, or insults the child

These signs don't prove that a child is being abused. However, they could be a sign that the child and his or her family needs help.