

Signs of Abuse and Neglect

While it is impossible to determine the presence of abuse or neglect by behavior, the following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of their parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for a child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil", or in some other negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child

Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals money or food
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for winter
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bed wetting

- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Become pregnant or contracts a venereal disease
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a partner or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous of the child's contact with other people, particularly those of the opposite sex

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior
- Is either inappropriately adult, such as parenting other children, or inappropriately immature
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Does not appear to be attached to their parent

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caretaker:

- Constantly blames, belittles or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's issues
- Overtly rejects the child