

## How to Recognize Child Abuse

There are four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

**Physical abuse** is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

### **Suspect Physical Abuse When You See:**

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite: cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

**Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

### **Suspect Neglect When You See:**

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn or dirty clothing
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school

**Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

### **Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See:**

- Over compliance
- Low self-esteem

- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems.

**Sexual abuse** is one of the four major types of child maltreatment. For more information on the definition and how to recognize sexual abuse, please visit the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website at [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/About\\_Child\\_Protective\\_Services/recognize\\_abuse.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/About_Child_Protective_Services/recognize_abuse.asp)

(Information from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services)

Be calm and comforting if your child or another child confides in you that they are being abused in any way. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you. You may call Child Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400 to file a report of abuse or file a report on their website at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).