





Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse



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Today's Objectives:

- Recognizing
 - The realities and prevalence of child abuse
 - Signs and symptoms of abuse
- Reporting
 - How to talk to a child who makes a disclosure
 - The importance of reporting
 - How to report

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Prevalence of Abuse

"Over the past 10 years, more than 20,000 American children are believed to have been killed in their own homes by family members. That is nearly four times the number of US soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The child maltreatment death rate in the US is triple Canada's and 11 times that of Italy. Millions of children are reported as abused and neglected every year."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15193530>





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Impact on Society



More than 3 million referrals of child maltreatment are received nationwide each year. At an estimated cost of \$124 billion dollars.

~Center for Disease Control



ND CAC Stats

Important Facts



The biggest myth about child abuse is that the dangers to children come from strangers. In most cases the perpetrator is someone the parent or child knows, and is often trusted by the child and family.



Physical Abuse



Physical abuse of a child is when a parent or caregiver causes any non-accidental physical injury to a child. There are many signs of physical abuse.

28.3% of adults report being physically abused as a child.



Examples of Physical Abuse

- Punching
- Hitting
- Spitting
- Kicking
- Strangling
- Restraining
- Burning
- Scalding
- Stabbing
- Head butting
- Biting
- Nipping
- Squeezing
- Shoving
- Suffocating
- Pushing
- Grabbing
- Choking
- Throwing
- Breaking bones
- Using weapons
- Poisoning
- Throwing things
- Force feeding
- Attempts to kill
- Reckless driving
- Pulling hair
- Murder



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Neglect



There is no "smoking gun" for most child neglect. While even one instance of neglect can cause lifelong harm to a child, neglect often requires a pattern of behavior over a period of time.



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Examples of Physical Neglect

- Deserting a child or refusing to take custody of a child who is under your care
- Repeatedly leaving a child in another's custody for days or weeks at a time
- Failing to provide enough healthy food and drink
- Failing to provide clothes that are appropriate to the weather
- Failing to ensure adequate personal hygiene
- Not supervising a child appropriately
- Leaving the child with an inappropriate caregiver
- Exposing a child to unsafe/unsanitary environments or situations



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Examples of Medical Neglect



- Not taking child to hospital or appropriate medical professional for serious illness or injury
- Keeping a child from getting needed treatment
- Not providing preventative medical and dental care
- Failing to follow medical recommendations for a child



Examples of Educational Neglect

- Allowing a child to miss too much school
- Not enrolling a child in school (or not providing comparable home-based education)
- Keeping a child from needed special education services



Psychological Maltreatment

When a parent or caregiver harms a child's mental and social development, or causes severe emotional harm, it is considered emotional abuse.



While a single incident may be abuse, most often emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that causes damage over time.



10.6% of adults report being emotionally abused as a child.

Examples of Psychological Maltreatment



Rejecting or ignoring:

- Telling a child he or she is unwanted or unloved, showing little interest in child, not initiating or returning affection, not listening to the child, not validating the child's feelings, breaking promises, cutting child off in conversation

Shaming or humiliating:

- Calling a child names, criticizing, belittling, demeaning, berating, mocking, using language or taking action that takes aim at child's feelings of self-worth

Terrorizing:

- Accusing, blaming, insulting, punishing with or threatening abandonment, harm or death, setting a child up for failure, manipulating, taking advantage of a child's weakness or reliance on adults, slandering, screaming, yelling

Isolating:

- Keeping child from friends, loved ones and positive activities, confining child to small area, forbidding play or other stimulating experiences

Corrupting:

- Permitting a child to use drugs, use alcohol, or engage in crime, telling lies to justify actions or ideas, encouraging misbehavior. Exposing a child to extreme or frequent violence, especially domestic violence

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Sexual Abuse



At least 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday



Less than 40% will tell someone about their abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when someone older or more powerful uses a child for sexual purposes or involves a child in sexual acts.

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Examples of Sexual Abuse:

Non-contact abuse:

- Making a child view a sex act
- Making a child view or show sex organs
- Inappropriate sexual talk



Contact abuse:

- Fondling and oral sex
- Penetration
- Making children perform a sex act
- Exploitation
- Child prostitution and child pornography

Half a million babies born this year will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday...~Darkness to Light

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Is it True?



Most kids never tell.



Fabricated abuse reports constitute only 4% to 8% of all reported cases. Most fabricated reports are made by adults involved in custody disputes or by adolescents. (Source: Darkness to Light)



Signs of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be very subtle and you may not even see signs. Look for changes in behavior and trust your instinct. Some of the behaviors you may see include:

Unexplained Injuries
Visible signs of physical abuse may include unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.

Changes in behavior
Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Children who have been abused often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.

Changes in eating
The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or loss.

Fear of going home
Children who have been abused may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them.



Signs of Child Abuse (cont.)

Returning to earlier behaviors
Children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.

Changes in school performance and attendance
Children who have been abused may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the child's injuries from authorities.

Risk-taking behaviors
Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.

Inappropriate sexual behaviors
Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

Changes in sleeping
Children who have been abused may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.

Lack of personal care or hygiene
Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.



Impact of Abuse

Factors Affecting the Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect

- There are many factors that play into how abuse affects a child including the child's age and developmental level when the abuse happened, the type of abuse, the frequency, duration, and severity of the abuse and the relationship between the child and the perpetrator.



Physical

- Death – Between four and five children die a day from abuse.
- Abusive head trauma which can result in death, vision impairment, motor impairment and cognitive impairments
- Impaired brain development that affects cognitive and language abilities, social/emotional development and mental health
- Poor physical health including chronic disease such as heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, liver disease, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high levels of C-reactive protein

Psychological

- Attachment difficulties in infancy
- Poor mental and emotional health. As many as 80% of young adults who have been abused experience mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders and suicide attempts
- Cognitive difficulties. More than 10 % of abused school-aged children showed some risk of cognitive problems or low academic achievement, 43 % had emotional or behavioral problems, and 13 % had both
- Social difficulties. Children who experience neglect are more likely to develop antisocial traits as they grow up. Parental neglect is associated with borderline personality disorders, attachment issues or affectionate behaviors with unknown/little-known people, inappropriate modeling of adult behavior, and aggression



Behavioral

- Difficulties during adolescence including smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse and high risk sexual behaviors
- Juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. At least 25% of abuse children experience problems such as delinquency, teen pregnancy and school difficulties
- Alcohol and drug abuse. Child abuse victims are 1.5 times more likely to use illicit drugs
- Abusive behavior those who have experienced abuse are more likely to repeat the behavior as adults
- Relationship difficulties. Child abuse can have a negative effect on the ability to establish and maintain healthy intimate relationships

Economic

- The total lifetime economic burden resulting from child abuse and neglect in the United States is \$124 billion
- The estimated average lifetime cost per victim of child abuse and neglect was \$210,012, including
 - Childhood health care costs
 - Adult medical costs
 - Productivity losses
 - Child welfare costs
 - Criminal justice costs
 - Special education costs



What Do I Do If a Child Discloses?



Listen

- Do not fill in words for the child and do not ask probing questions. If the child is having a difficult time talking, don't help the child with words that you think the child is going to say. Allow the child to tell you in their words or in the normal ways that he or she communicates.



Reassure

- Tell the child you are glad they told you and that you believe him or her. Let him/her know that was not their fault and reassure the child that they are not in trouble. If the child asks you not to tell anyone, remind the child that it is your job to help keep him or her safe and you will do whatever you may need to do to keep him or her safe.

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Recognize your own feelings

- Don't express panic or shock or be overly critical of the offender. Children are protective of people they care about, even if they are being abused.



Report it

- Contact your local law enforcement and/or social services to report the abuse.


Evidence that a child has been abused is not always obvious, and many children do not report that they have been abused. Only around 38% of child victims disclose the fact that they have been abused. Of these, 40% tell a close friend rather than an adult or authority, which does not always result in a formal report.

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Who MUST Report?

In North Dakota, anyone **may** report suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protection Services (CPS). However, certain professionals **must, by law**, report suspected child abuse or neglect—in other words, they are **mandated reporters**. It's a Class B misdemeanor when a mandated reporter chooses **not** to report suspected abuse. To fulfill the mandate, reports **must** be made directly to a county social service agency.

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70% of cases are not reported.

"I TOLD AND NO ONE HELPED ME."

If you suspect abuse, or just need to talk to someone about what you have seen or heard, please have courage and [report it](#).


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Mandated Reporters Include:

- physicians
- nurses
- dentists
- optometrists
- dental hygienists
- medical examiners or coroners
- any other medical or mental health professionals
- religious practitioners of the healing arts
- school teachers, administrators, and counselors
- addiction counselors
- social workers
- childcare professionals
- foster parents
- police or law enforcement officers
- juvenile court personnel
- probation officers
- juvenile services employees

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How to Report



What can you do to help?

- Abusive families need help. You could even save a life. Children die every day from abuse and neglect. Often someone is aware of the maltreatment and did not report it. When you report abuse, families are connected with counseling, resources and services. This may reduce stress and save a life.

Who do I call to make a report?

- In case of an emergency, call 911. In non-emergency situations, call your local county social services to make a report about the abuse.

Guidelines for making a report

- Report your suspicions to the public children service agency or law enforcement agency in the county in which the child lives or was abused.

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What information do I need?

- The name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected
- The age of the child
- The name and address of the parents or caretakers
- The name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child and the address if available. The reason you suspect the child is being abused and neglected
- Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation
- You have the option of giving your name or reporting anonymously. Giving your name can help the investigator clarify information. The agency will not give your name to the person suspected of abusing the child.

Please Note: All of the above information is not needed to make a report. If you are not sure you have enough information to report, always err on the safety of the child.



Anytime there is an allegation of abuse, it needs to be reported and investigated by the proper authorities. A report is the statement that you have knowledge of or reasonable cause to suspect someone has been abused or neglected. Any case of suspected abuse or neglect must be reported, even if the event occurred in the past.

www.nd.gov/eforms/docs/sfn00960.pdf



Questions, comments, thoughts?



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701-323-5626

www.dakotacac.org