

## REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE

### Introduction

Nebraska state law requires any person who suspects that a child has been physically or sexually abused or neglected to report it promptly to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

**Adult & Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline**  
**1-800-652-1999**

### History of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse & neglect is not new to our culture. It is often hidden, suppressed, or denied. People may refuse to believe others they know are capable of treating a child in such a manner. It is an uncomfortable topic to discuss and violence is often glorified & imitated.

Henry Kempe wrote an article in the 1962 Journal of the American Medical Association titled "Child Maltreatment Prevention: Past, Present, and Future - the Battered Child Syndrome". After this, between 1963 & 1967, all states developed child abuse reporting laws.

Most victims are under the age of 4 years. Child maltreatment adds cost to our society through:

- Physical and mental health care
- Law enforcement & court efforts
- Social services & Special Education for victims
- Unemployment

Courts/law enforcement are often reluctant to interfere with family discipline. Parents have more rights legally as adults than their children.

### Child's Response to Abuse & Neglect

Most abuse is perpetrated by someone child knows, not a stranger. In most cases, the abuse have gone on for some time before it is discovered. Abuse, and even more so, neglect is not usually discovered with the first incident. The child is usually aware that the abuse/neglect he/she is experiencing is wrong, but if it has gone on for a long time, he/she may view it as normal for his/her family situation.

### Definitions

Abuse is defined in three ways.

1. Physical abuse exists when a child has a non-accidental injury.
2. Emotional abuse exists when parents always put blame on a child or always reject the child.
3. Sexual abuse exists when an adult uses a child as a part of any type of sexual act.

Neglect is defined in two ways.

1. Emotional neglect is when the child suffers from the parent's not giving them chances for feeling loved, wanted, secure, and worthy.
2. Physical neglect is when a parent does not provide basic needs or a safe place to live. Examples are:
  - not having enough food or clothing;
  - not following doctor's orders;
  - not providing the supervision needed to keep the child safe;
  - not having heat in the winter.

### **What Can I Expect if I Report Someone for Abuse?**

- You are not required to give your name. You will be asked to give your name so that, if necessary, the Protection and Safety Worker can get more information later. As long as the report is in good faith, you are not liable. Your report is confidential. Your name can only be given to law enforcement or a court of law.
- The Department will investigate all reports of suspected child abuse and neglect that meet the screening criteria. The Department and police work together on reports and the police may also do an investigation. Due to the confidential nature of the investigation, the person who reports the abuse cannot be informed of the action taken or the result of the report.  
([http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/Pages/cha\\_abuse.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/cha_abuse.aspx))

### **Signs of Physical Abuse**

Unexplained cuts, burns, wounds, fractures, black eyes

New and fading bruises

Child shows fear of adults or parents

Child reports abuse

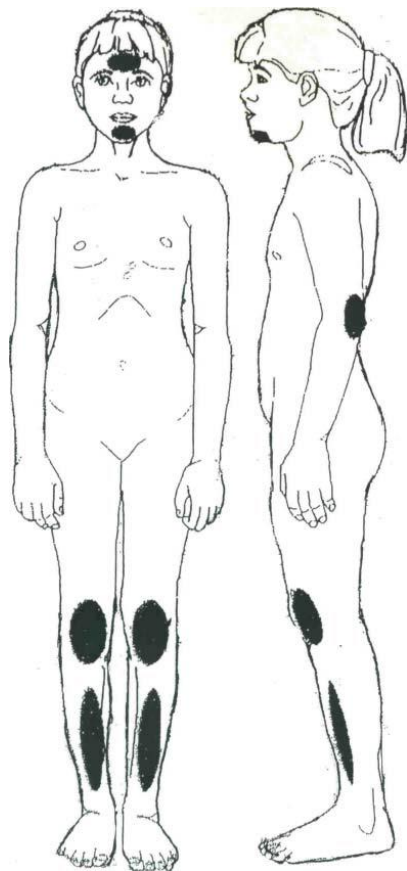
Conflicting reports of how an injury occurred

Parent has history of being abuse victim as a child

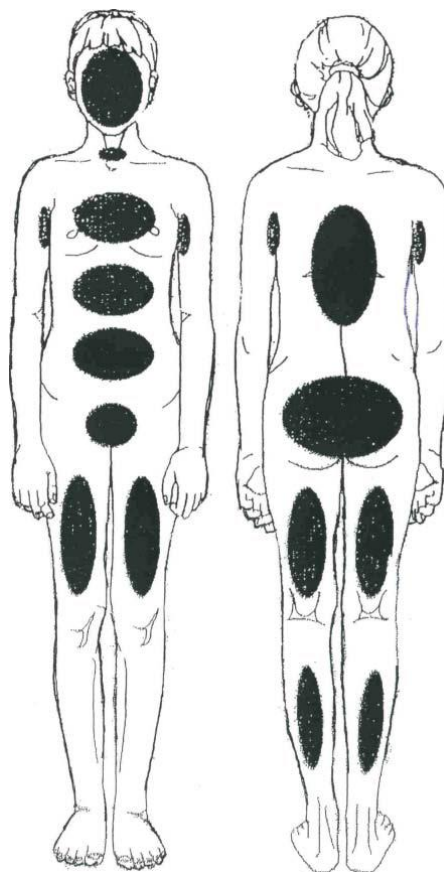
### **Pattern of Normal**

### **Patterns of Suspicious**

## Bruising in a Child:



## Bruising in a Child



## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse happens more to girls than to boys. 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse (2010). Most sexual abuse happens to children rather than adults. 60% of perpetrators & victims know each other. Most of the time sexual abuse is not reported or is inadvertently reported. Victims of sexual abuse are more likely to experience:

- Depression
- PTSD
- Self-medicating
- Suicide

## Signs of sexual abuse

Child has difficulty walking or sitting. He/she doesn't like being touched or is jumpy with touch from others. The child is having sudden or increased nightmares, incontinence or bedwetting. There is a sudden change in appetite. He/she tells bizarre sexually-oriented stories told by the child. The child has a sophisticated or unusual knowledge of sexual behaviors beyond what is considered normal for their age and development.

Child is uncomfortable alone in a room with person of authority. He/she feels powerless. A girl may get pregnant. Children often run away from home. A child reports sexual abuse behaviors by parent or another. One or both parents may be overly protective, secretive or attempts to isolate the child from others.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Child may be overly compliant or overly demanding and aggressive toward others. He/she is having inappropriate behavior for his/her age – acting as the adult or overly immature. The child may make suicide attempts or even complete suicide. There is a noticeable lack of attachment between child and parent. Parent may have a negative attitude toward the child.

### **Child Neglect is defined in two ways:**

#### **Emotional neglect**

A pattern of behavior exists on the part of the parent or caregiver that attacks the child's sense of security, worth, and sense of be an individual. There is constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, rejecting the child by the parent or caregiver. There may be threats of physical or mental injury, or abandonment. This could be physical neglect also if the threats are carried out.

#### **Physical & Medical neglect**

Physical neglect is often noted by the lack of any of the following:

- Shelter
- Clothing
- Food
- Supervision
- Transportation

Physical neglect may be indicated by any of the following factors being present also:

- Positive drug test in child
- Commits or allows sexual crimes against the child
- Leaving child alone with a known sex offender

Medical neglect is often indicated by the following situations:

- Lack of needed medical attention to maintain health prevent ill health
- Lack of dental care, glasses, immunizations

#### **Signs of Neglect of a Child**

Child often misses school without a valid reason. Child steals food and/or money because not enough food is provided at home. Child is consistently dirty with body odor and or poor personal hygiene. There may be a change in the child's behavior or school performance. The

child has not received medical attention for health issues even though they have been brought to the parent's attention. The child is always watching as if expecting something to happen.

There may be a frequent or consistent lack of adult supervision for the child. The child is overly compliant with any and all requests from adults in his/her life. He/she comes to school early, stays late, and doesn't want to go home. He/she is having learning difficulties not related to specific learning disabilities, and is often distracted from their school work.

### **Signs of Child Neglect to Watch for in a Parent**

The child's parent has unrealistic expectations that are inconsistent with the child's developmental age. There may be alcohol or drug abuse by the parent. Often the parent denies problems at home or if problems are acknowledged, they are blamed on the child. A parent requests harsher or the harshest punishment for child at school beyond what the offense normally incurs.

The parent does not value child. There is often a role reversal between the child and the parent. The parent may be pathetic, depressed, or have irrational behavior or poor impulse control. The parent reacts to stress with violence and then sometimes feels remorse, but doesn't permanently change the behavior.

### **Consequences of Abuse & Neglect**

Neglect or abuse has an adverse effect on the child's developing brain and body. A lack of contact changes the body chemistry that promotes brain & heart development.

## References

Nebraska DHHS Child Abuse & Neglect – retrieved 7/30/2015 from [http://dhhs.ne.gov/children\\_family\\_services/Pages/cha\\_abuse.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/cha_abuse.aspx)