

Did you know that nearly 700,000 children are abused annually in the United States?

Some people hear the words child abuse and think physical or sexual abuse, but actually Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment.

The current Pandemic is increasing the chances of children being abused, for multiple reasons. First, teachers and other school staff are one of the leading reporters of abuse. When children are not going to school or having contact with other adults who are keeping an eye out for any type of maltreatment, these kids are less likely to get the help they need. Another reason there is additional concern is that the current state of affairs is adding additional stress on parents. Being stuck at home with our children 24/7 is not easy. On top of that, a lot of people are facing new financial hardships due to not being able to work or find a job. Many individuals are finding it hard to meet their Mental Health needs or make it to drug and alcohol appointments. Added stressors such as these increase the likelihood of child maltreatment.

In honor of National Child Abuse Awareness month, we wanted to provide you with some information about child abuse so that you can help us be part of the solution. In this document, we will give a brief overview of the different types of child abuse as well as the signs to look for. We will also outline what you can do if you suspect a child in your neighborhood is being abused or mistreated. Finally, we will provide information on how to increase your family's resilience to abuse/maltreatment.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse- intentional physical injury inflicted on a child. Physical Abuse tends to be the easiest to identify due to physical injuries such as bruises, lacerations, burns, etc.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures or burns
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation

Sexual Abuse- When an adult or older child engages in sexual activities with a child or minor. The law does define the many different sexual activities, but overall, anything sexual whether actual sexual actions, videos, pictures, etc. is considered sexual abuse.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Sexual behavior or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age
- Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection
- Blood in the child's underwear
- Statements that he or she was sexually abused
- Inappropriate sexual contact with other children

Emotional Abuse- pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance.

- Signs and Symptoms:
- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Social withdrawal or a loss of interest or enthusiasm
- Depression
- Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride the bus
- Desperately seeks affection
- A decrease in school performance or loss of interest in school
- Loss of previously acquired developmental skills

Neglect- deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Poor growth or weight gain or being overweight
- Poor hygiene
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- Taking food or money without permission
- Hiding food for later
- Poor record of school attendance
- Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental or psychological problems or lack of necessary follow-up care

Along with the above, here are some additional signs to be aware of...

- Withdrawal from friends or usual activities
- Changes in behavior — such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity — or changes in school performance
- Depression, anxiety or unusual fears, or a sudden loss of self-confidence
- An apparent lack of supervision
- Frequent absences from school
- Reluctance to leave school activities, as if he or she doesn't want to go home
- Attempts at running away
- Rebellious or defiant behavior
- Self-harm or attempts at suicide

If you suspect Child Abuse call Child Line at 1-800-932-0313.



“ALONE, WE
CAN DO SO
LITTLE;
TOGETHER,
WE CAN DO
SO MUCH”

HELEN KELLER

Resilience

Resilience is defined as an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. The more resilient you and your family are, the easier it will be to adjust to and make it through difficult times such as these.

How can you strengthen your family's resilience?

See below for some ideas to focus on...

1. Create a support network and use community resources. This could be family, friends, neighbors, church; whoever you see as a support. It is important to have individuals that you can go to for help. It could be a shoulder to cry on, someone to watch your child for a few hours so you can get some rest, someone to help out with a ride to the grocery store, etc. Tell yourself that it is ok to ask for help. There are also community resources that are available to you, Head Start being one of them. Let your Family Advocate or Family Partner know if you have a need and they will either help you achieve your goal or help you find a resource that can.
2. Make sure that your Mental Health and/or Drug and Alcohol Treatment needs are being met. This may be when you need to use that support network discussed above. If you are not making sure that your emotional health is manageable, it will be harder to help your family maintain good emotional health. If you need help identifying a provider, ask your Family Advocate or Family Partner.
3. Increase your family's engagement with each other. Building good relationships with your partner and/or children is very important. You can do this by spending quality time with each other. See the attached document for ways to connect.
4. Practice self-care. Practicing self-care is so important to keep your mood in check and help you manage your stress level. It will help you be at your best, and when you are at your best your family will be at their best. See handout on living a healthy lifestyle.