

Child Abuse and Neglect

There are four kinds of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** Non-accidental trauma or physical injury of a child, or failure to protect a child from harm.
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm, or risk of harm, to the child's health or safety.
- **Sexual abuse:** When a child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator or sexual behaviors/situations in which there is a sexual component.
- **Psychological harm:** A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered. May include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act.

More information can be found at: [Reporting Abuse](#)

Every kind of child abuse is against the law.

The following has been developed merely as a guide; this list should certainly be considered as non-inclusive. **The presence of one of these signs does not necessarily indicate abuse. The presence of more than one of these signs together should be a cause for concern.**

Possible Physical Abuse

- Unexplained bruises in various stages of healing (bruises will be different colors)
- Self-destructive behavior
- Welts, human bite marks, bald spots
- Unexplained burns, especially cigarette burns or glove-like burns
- Unexplained fractures, abrasions, or other injuries
- Nervous, hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behaviors
- Unusually wary of physical contact
- Unusually frightened of parent or caretaker
- Expresses little or no emotion when hurt
- Extremely shy, withdrawn, and passive

Possible Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injuries inconsistent with the child’s age • Engages in ongoing sexual activity that is not appropriate for the child’s age • Has detailed and sophisticated understanding of sexual behaviors • Regression to such behaviors as bed-wetting, speech loss, etc. • Suffers sleep disturbances or nightmares • Pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in genitalia • Venereal disease • Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections <p><i>The sexually abused older child may:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit delinquent or aggressive behavior • Show signs of depression • Display self-injurious behaviors such as substance abuse, self-mutilation, attempted suicide, prostitution, and running away
Possible Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech disorders • Delayed physical or emotional development • Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies • Habit disorders, sucking, rocking • Unduly passive and undemanding • Very low self-esteem • Extremely demanding, aggressive, and angry • Antisocial, destructive • Depressed and/or suicidal • Attention seeking • Delinquent behavior, especially in adolescents
Possible Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment by parent or caretaker • Unattended medical needs • Consistent lack of supervision • Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene • Indiscriminate with his or her affection • Pale, listless, begs or steal food • Falls asleep in class, regularly displays fatigue • Self-destructive behavior <p>Sources: Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina and Caldwell County DSS staff.</p>