



Colorado now has one statewide number to report suspected child abuse and neglect. If you see or hear something that concerns you, just pick up the phone.

1-844-CO-4-KIDS

(1-844-264-5437)

You Dial the Number. We'll Make the Call.

Your confidential, toll-free call can protect a child and help a family. In an emergency, call 911.

Learn more at
CO4Kids.org.



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Department of Human Services

Kids can be good at hiding abuse and neglect.



1-844-CO-4-KIDS

Everyone in the community plays a role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

What is child abuse and neglect?

Federal law defines child abuse and/or neglect through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) as, at a minimum, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

Types of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Institutional Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse (or psychological abuse) is a 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.

Consider the possibility of emotional abuse when the CHILD:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example), or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Consider the possibility of emotional abuse when the PARENT OR OTHER CARETAKER:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Institutional Abuse

It is possible that any form of abuse or neglect may occur while a child is in the care of an institution (schools, hospitals, daycares, foster care, or residential facilities). If the maltreatment is caused by employees of the institution, it is classified as institutional abuse. Whenever anyone is aware of any form of child maltreatment occurring while the child is in the care of an institution, they should make a report.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as any non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child.

Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the CHILD:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the PARENT OR OTHER CARETAKER:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury, or provides an explanation that is not consistent with the injury
- Describes the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child
- Has a history of abusing animals or pet

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the CHILD:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the PARENT OR OTHER CARETAKER:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect comes in many forms, including physical, medical, educational, and emotional.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the CHILD:

- Wears soiled clothing or clothing that is significantly too small or large or is often in need of repair
- Seems inadequately dressed for the weather
- Always seems to be hungry; hoards, steals, or begs for food or comes to school with little food
- Often appears listless and tired with little energy
- Frequently reports caring for younger siblings
- Demonstrates poor hygiene, smells of urine or feces, or has dirty or decaying teeth
- Seems emaciated or has a swollen/distended stomach (indicative of malnutrition)
- Has unattended medical or dental problems, such as infected sores
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the PARENT OR OTHER CARETAKER:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Denies the existence of or blames the child for the child's problems in school or at home
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Looks to the child primarily for care, attention, or satisfaction of emotional needs

