

Fact Sheet—Child Abuse and Neglect

IMPORTANT: You are NOT expected to look for, actively investigate or report suspected cases of child abuse. However, if you are aware of abuse or neglect you should tell a trusted adult, like your parent or a teacher.

Child Abuse

- **Definition:** Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.
- Child abuse can take many different forms and includes physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.
- Some signs of child abuse include the following:
 - A child with bruises, burns or scars.
 - Often, physically abused children are afraid of contact, such as hugging or being held.
 - A child who has low self-esteem, seems very sad, cries frequently, acts quiet or is very loud and aggressive.
 - In the case of a sexually abused child, a child who is afraid to undress or have physical contact with anyone, or who exhibits inappropriate behavior. He or she may also have signs of physical abuse.

Child Neglect

- **Definition:** Failure to provide for a child's basic needs.
- Child neglect includes the failure to feed, wash or properly clothe a child.
- Signs of child neglect include children who—
 - Beg or steal food or money.
 - Don't get medical or dental care.
 - Are consistently dirty or have severe body odor.
 - Lack sufficient clothing for the weather.

If you think a child you are babysitting has been abused or neglected, how you act is important. Tell an adult you trust (e.g., your own parent or guardian or a teacher) about your concerns and ask him or her for help. You can also talk to a professional crisis counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling Childhelp National Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD or 1-800-422-4453).

For more information on this topic, see the Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov.

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov