

## **CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE**

### **Definition:**

Physical abuse occurs when a parent or a person responsible for the child's welfare:

- Inflicts a physical injury to a child that is non-accidental, including bruises, bites, bone fractures, cuts, welts, and burns;
- Creates a substantial risk of physical harm to a child;
- Violates a court order that prohibits the perpetrator from having access to the child;
- Deliberately inflicts cruel or unusual treatment which results in physical or mental suffering by the child;
- Inflicts **excessive** corporal punishment (NOTE: If a parent or caretaker causes physical injury during overly harsh discipline, it does not matter that he or she did not intend to hurt the child.);
- Gives or allows a controlled substance to be given to a child under 18 years of age;
- Exposes the child to the manufacture of methamphetamine.

### **Possible Signs:**

Some children show obvious, outward signs of abuse, such as:

- Unexplained marks on the body (cuts, bruises, welts, burns, black eyes, fractures or dislocations)
- Bruises or welts in various stages of healing, or in clusters or patterns in the shape of an object, like a belt or an electrical cord
- Pattern burns, such as cigarette burns, iron burns, burns in the shape of a specific object, or scald burns in an immersion pattern
- Marks hidden from typically exposed areas of skin

Other children may show more subtle indicators, such as behavioral changes, including:

- Extreme vigilance or watchfulness
- Bullying smaller children
- Poor social interactions with peers
- Extreme fear of parents or caregivers (e.g. does not want to go home)
- Harming animals

NOTE: You may notice some of these signs after a child has missed school, counseling, or other appointments for a period of time. However, be aware that some children will not display any overt behavioral changes.

## CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

### **Definition:**

Sexual abuse occurs when a parent or a person responsible for the child's welfare commits any of the following acts:

- Sexual penetration. This means any contact between the sex organ of one person and the sex organ, mouth, or anus of another person. Acts include vaginal, anal and oral sex.
- Sexual molestation of a child. This occurs when the perpetrator touches the child or asks the child to touch him for the sexual gratification or arousal of the perpetrator or the child. Examples include fondling a child or having the child fondle the perpetrator.
- Sexual exploitation. This is the "sexual use of a child for sexual arousal, gratification, advantage or profit," as defined by DCFS. It includes child pornography, forcing a child to watch sex acts, or exposing genitals to a child.

### **Possible Signs:**

- sexual knowledge beyond what is age appropriate
- recurring pain or itching in genital or anal areas
- sexually transmitted diseases
- frequent bladder or urinary tract infections
- genital injury
- unexplained regression or fear
- sexual acting out behavior:

Some **examples of sexual acting out behavior** include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ **A child forcing another person to do things that are sexual in nature.** For example, a child telling another person to take off his/her clothes or trying to forcibly undress the other person. Another example is a child who aggressively tries to touch the genitals of adults or other children and gets angry when they are prohibited from doing so.
- ▶ **Sexual acts that children do with themselves.** These may include exposing their genitals in public and getting angry when told not to do so, or touching/rubbing their own genitals to the point of hurting themselves.

It is also important to assess the developmental age of the child or children and to consider any differences in power between them:

- ▶ When **two children of the same age** are involved in sexual exploration, it may be perfectly normal. It becomes a point of concern when one child uses force, bribery or threats, or when the acts show sexual knowledge that is not appropriate for the child's age. For example, it is not "age appropriate" for a 4-year-old child to ask another 4-year-old child to perform oral sex.

- ▶ Adults should be aware, not only of the age of the children, but also their **developmental level and power position**. If two 10-year-olds are engaged in sexual behaviors, but one of them is developmentally delayed and functioning at a 4-year-old level, you should suspect child abuse. Also, if one child is physically larger or stronger than the other child, this should raise your suspicion of child abuse.

NOTE: Some children will NOT display any overt behavioral changes.

Sexual predators often abuse children in ways that do not leave physical signs, such as fondling the child, exposing themselves to the child, or having the child perform sexual acts on the adult. Even sexual penetration of a child does not always leave obvious physical signs of abuse.

## **CHILD NEGLECT**

### ***Definition:***

Illinois enforces “minimum parenting standards.” According to DCFS, neglect occurs when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide these minimum requirements for their child:

- adequate supervision
- medical care/attention
- food
- clothing
- shelter

Neglect may also include significantly delaying the provision of these necessities (such as failing to take a child who has a broken bone for medical treatment). Other forms of neglect include taking illegal drugs during pregnancy, placing a child at risk of harm, or exposing a child to hazardous living conditions. Any child who is present during the manufacture of methamphetamine is considered abused and/or neglected.

**NOTE: Poverty does not necessarily equate with neglect. Most parents are able to provide the minimum requirements for their child.**

### ***Possible Signs:***

- Often hungry in the morning
- Poor hygiene
- Evidence of no or poor supervision
- Underweight, poor growth, failure to thrive
- Dressed inappropriately for the weather
- Erratic attendance at school