*The Month of April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month*

*Sunday, April 28, 2019 is National Blue Sunday Day of Prayer for Abused Children*

What Are the Major Types of Child Abuse & Neglect?

*Physical abuse* is 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.1 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.

*Neglect* is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Neglect may be: • Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision) • Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)2 • Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs) • Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child’s emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs.

*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. Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA as “the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.” 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. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove, and therefore, child protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or mental injury to the child. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other types of maltreatment are identified.

*Abandonment* is now defined in many States as a form of neglect. In general, a child is considered to be abandoned when the parent’s identity or whereabouts are unknown, the child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers serious harm, or the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support for a specified period of time. Some States have enacted laws—often called safe haven laws—that provide safe places for parents to relinquish newborn infants.

*Substance abuse* is an element of the definition of child abuse or neglect in many States. Circumstances that are considered abuse or neglect in some States include the following: • Prenatal exposure of a child to harm due to the mother’s use of an illegal drug or other substance • Manufacture of methamphetamine in the presence of a child • Selling, distributing, or giving illegal drugs or alcohol to a child • Use of a controlled substance by a caregiver that impairs the caregiver’s ability to adequately care for the child.

*Over*

The Following Signs May Signal the Presence of Child Abuse or Neglect

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| Signs of Physical Abuse *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 adult caregiver***:** • 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 negative way • Uses harsh physical discipline with the child • Has a history of abuse as a child • Has a history of abusing animals or pets | Signs of Sexual Abuse *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 14Runs 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 adult caregiver:* • Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits child’s contact with other children, especially the opposite sex • Is secretive and isolated • Is jealous or controlling with family members |
| Signs of Neglect *Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:*• Is frequently absent from school • Begs or steals food or moneyLacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses • Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor • Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather • Abuses alcohol or other drugs • States that there is no one at home to provide care *Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:* • Appears to be indifferent to the child • Seems apathetic or depressed • Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner • Is abusing alcohol or other drugs | Signs of Emotional Maltreatment **Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment 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 maltreatment when the parent or other adult caregiver:** • Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child • Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child’s problem• Overtly rejects the child rejects the child |

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