WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse happens when a child's parent or other person in charge harms or neglects a child.

What are the types of child abuse?
In general, there are four major types of child abuse:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect

What is physical child abuse?
Physical abuse could result from a parent or person in charge causing physical injury to a child, or failing to adequately supervise a child or from a pattern of neglect of the child. Here are some examples of physical abuse:

- beating
- slapping
- hitting
- pushing
- throwing
- shaking
- burning

A child who is physically abused may:

- have burns, bite marks, cuts, bruises, or welts in the shape of an object
- not want to go home
- be afraid of adults

What is sexual abuse?
Sexual abuse happens when a parent or other person in charge sexually molests or uses a child for sexual purposes or knowingly fails to protect a child from sexual abuse. Here are some examples of sexual abuse:

- any sexual act between an adult and a child, including intercourse
- fondling
- exposing a child to adult sexual activity
- sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography

A child who is sexually abused may:

- have an inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts
- be very compliant or extremely aggressive
- be afraid of a certain person or a family member
- have difficulty walking or sitting

What is emotional abuse?
Emotional abuse occurs when a parent or other person in charge causes emotional harm or fails to protect a child from emotional harm that results from verbal abuse, mental abuse and psychological abuse. Here are some examples of emotional abuse:

- yelling at, screaming at, threatening, frightening, or bullying a child
- humiliating the child, name-calling, making negative comparisons to others, or saying things like: "You're no good. You're worthless. You're bad. Having you was a mistake."
- showing little to no physical affection (such as hugs) or words of affection (praise or saying "I love you."
- saying that everything is the child's fault.
- withdrawing attention, giving the child the "cold shoulder"
- confining a child in a closet or a dark room, or tying the child to a chair for long periods of time
- allowing the child to be present during violent behavior of others, including the physical abuse of others

A child who is emotionally abused may:

- show signs of serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal
- show self-destructive or aggressive behavior
- show delays physical, emotional or mental development

What is neglect?
Neglect happens when a child's parent or other person in charge does not provide for a child's physical, developmental, emotional or psychological needs. Here are some examples of neglect:

- failing to provide:
  - proper food
  - clothing suitable for the weather
  - supervision
  - a home that is clean and safe
o medical care, as needed
o failing to provide emotional support, love and affection

A child who is neglected may:

- not wear clothing that’s suitable for the weather
- be dirty or unbathed
- be very hungry
- not be properly supervised

**WAYS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

- Be a nurturing parent.
- Help a friend, neighbor, or relative by watching their children and giving them a break.
- Help yourself by taking time out when you feel overwhelmed.
- Never ever shake a baby as it may result in serious injury or death.
- Get involved to create or grow programs and services in your local community to help families be healthy and supported.
- Monitor your child’s television and internet use and exposure to violence as it may harm your children.
- Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention program.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect.

**HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

If you suspect that a child may be the victim of abuse or neglect it is your responsibility to report it. You may contact your:

- Local or State office of Department of Human Resources
- Local law enforcement agency

**MANDATORY REPORTER**

Alabama Law defines that some professionals are required by law to report suspected abuse including but not limited to:

- Hospital and medical staff
- Dentists
- Teachers and school staff
- Law enforcement officers and staff
- Day care workers
- Mental health workers
- Clergy and faith leaders

Mandatory reports are required to report all suspected abuse immediately to the Department of Human Resources or Local Law Enforcement. Failure to report is a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and a monetary fine. Additional civil liabilities may also be pursued.

**APEC IS HERE TO HELP**

APEC provides free training, information, and consultation to families. Visit our training calendar for more information about learning opportunities at [www.alabamaparentcenter.com](http://www.alabamaparentcenter.com) or call our center.

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