



## Policy: Reportable Abuse and Neglect

Abuse of a child can be grouped under four main categories. For the purpose of reporting in all categories, the abuse or neglect is known to have happened or there is deemed to be substantial risk that it may occur.

**Physical Abuse:** A deliberate non-accidental physical assault on a child that results in physical harm. This may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline. The injuries sustained by the child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts, bite marks, or major fractures of bones or skull. In extreme form it could result in the death of the child.

**Sexual Abuse:** A generic term used to describe a range of sexual activity or behavior perpetrated towards a child (under the age of 16) -- with or without the child's consent -- for the sexual gratification of the other person. The abuse can occur within the family (intra familial) or outside the family (extra familial) and may be homosexual or heterosexual in nature. Examples include instances where a child is encouraged, coerced, forced, or even enticed into acts such as sexual molestation, fondling, sexual intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, exhibitionism, or any sexual exploitation including pornography.

**Emotional Abuse:** The most difficult type of abuse to define and identify. It may range from habitual humiliation of the child to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. If a child is told often enough that he or she is no good and will come to a bad end, he or she may come to believe it and act accordingly. Similarly, lack of nurturing (holding, cuddling, and warm verbal communication) in the early years can be very damaging. Combined with verbal abuse, it can cause a child great suffering. Emotional abuse is considered when this is persistent or chronic on the part of the caregiver and results in some degree of emotional damage to the child, evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive forms of behavior. This form of abuse may occur separate from, or along with, other forms of abuse or neglect. Children with emotionally abusive parents may exhibit behaviors similar to children who have been physically or sexually abused.

**Child Neglect:** A chronic and serious omission on the part of the parent/guardian that results in physical harm to the child. It does not include emotional harm. The term "chronic" demands that the neglect constitutes a pattern of conduct over a period of time. The term "serious" conveys a marked and substantial departure from the standard of care expected of a reasonable parent.

**OUR RESPONSE:** If any of these abuses are known (by testimony of child, or direct examination or witness) they must be reported to social services. A child may only be withheld from their parent/guardian if the child is in direct or imminent danger of bodily harm, or if instructed by social services. Second hand instruction is not sufficient grounds.