

Signs of Child Abuse

Child Abuse is defined as any deliberate harm or maltreatment to a child under the age of 18, and while we are familiar with signs of Child Abuse such as bruises or scars, there are more warning signs to look for. When we are able to recognize these signs, we can better intervene in the life of an abused child. General, overall symptoms of Child Abuse include:

- Changes in behavior – the child may suddenly be aggressive, angry, defiant, hostile or even hyperactive
- The child withdraws from friends, or activities they once loved
- The child appears depressed, anxious, develops sudden fears or an abrupt loss of self-esteem
- The child appears hesitant to go home

Signs of Physical Abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Suspicious injuries that are difficult to be justified by a simple accident:
 - ◊ Injuries could include bruises, fractures, burns, consistent pains and/or aches
 - ◊ Injuries to parts of the child's body that are generally covered by clothing; buttocks, top and inside of legs and arms, the child's back, and the child's genital areas.
 - ◊ Injuries in the shape of a circle, straight line, or in a pattern
- Injuries where the explanation changes
- Lack of medical or dental attention for the injury

Any sexual activity with a child is considered Sexual Abuse. Activities such as fondling, kissing, oral-genital contact, intercourse, or exposing the child to pornography. Signs of Sexual Abuse consist of:

- A child who hesitates or refuses to use the bathroom
- Knowledge of or sexual behavior that is inappropriate for the child's age
- Exhibiting signs of discomfort or pain when sitting, or complaints of genital pain
- Genital discharge or bleeding through pants

Signs of Emotional Abuse include:

- Loss or a lack of self-esteem or self-confidence
- The child appears suddenly socially withdrawn
- The child appears more angry, sad or fearful than before
- The child regresses, or there is a loss of previously acquired developmental skills
- Failing grades and/or a change of behavior at school
- Increase of headaches or stomachaches with no medical reasoning
- Depression

Failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as adequate food, shelter, affection, supervision, education or medical care is considered Neglect. The following are common signs of Neglect:

- Poor hygiene
- Poor growth or weight (either be under or overweight)
- A child who is sick or tired all the time
- Lack of proper clothing or clothing that is inappropriate for the weather
- Hiding food, stealing food, or eating a lot
- Poor school attendance
- Lack of appropriate medical attention

If you observe any of these Signs of Child Abuse or believe a child is in immediate danger, call 1-800-252-5400, www.txabusehotline.org, or 911.

