

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY



Every year in Florida, thousands of children are subjected to child abuse, which can take the form of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment or mental injury. Too many continue to suffer because the abuse is never reported. Under Florida law, anyone who suspects a child may be abused or neglected has a responsibility to report it.

Signs that a child may be a victim of child abuse:

- Unusual fearfulness
- Lack of hygiene or inappropriate dress
- Delayed emotional, intellectual or language development
- Frequent injuries
- Feeding disorders
- Rocking, self-inflicted pain
- Sleep disorders, bed-wetting
- Lack of eye contact, poor socialization
- Acting out in school
- Unexplained scars or bruises
- Malnutrition
- Many school absences

CALL 911 FOR EMERGENCIES

**TO REPORT
ABUSE:**

Phone: 1.800.962.2873

Fax: 1.800.914.0004

Online: floridaabusehotline.gov

CHILD ABUSE

Look for the signs

Dial 1-800-96-ABUSE

Signs of Physical Abuse

The child may have unexplained:

- bruises, welts, cuts or other injuries
- broken bones
- burns

A child experiencing physical abuse may:

- seem withdrawn or depressed
- seem afraid to go home or may run away
- shy away from physical contact
- be aggressive
- wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries

Signs of Sexual Abuse

The child may have:

- torn, stained or bloody underwear
- trouble walking or sitting
- pain or itching in genital area
- a sexually transmitted disease

A child experiencing sexual abuse may:

- have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively
- fear a particular person
- seem withdrawn or depressed
- gain or lose weight suddenly
- shy away from physical contact
- run away from home

Signs of Neglect

The child may have:

- unattended medical needs
- little or no supervision at home
- poor hygiene
- appear underweight

A child experiencing neglect may:

- be frequently tired or hungry
- steal food
- appear overly needy for adult attention

Look for the Patterns

Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

If a child tells YOU about abuse:

Be a good listener. Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. Encourage, but don't pressure him/her to talk. Ask open ended questions.

Be supportive. Tell the child he/she did the right thing by coming to you. Stress that he/she is not to blame. Let the child know that you want to help.

Don't overreact. This can frighten the child or prevent him/her from telling you more. Do not talk negatively about the suspected abuser in front of the child.

Document and report it. Document your conversation as soon as you can. If possible, write down the child's exact words.

Don't delay. Never assume someone else will report the abuse. The sooner it's reported, the sooner the child and their family can be helped.

WHO MUST REPORT ABUSE?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Doctors | Police Officers |
| Nurses | Child Care Workers |
| Social Workers | Any Witnesses |
| Any/All School Personnel | |



Call or Report it online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>

