

Reporting Abuse -

What is Your Responsibility?

Under Florida Statute 39.201, "Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare" must report abuse to the abuse hotline. Persons in the following professions will be required to provide their information when making reports of child abuse: Health or mental health professionals, practitioners who rely solely on spiritual means for healing, school teachers or other school officials or personnel, social workers, day care center workers, or other professional child care, foster care, residential, or institutional workers, law enforcement officers or judges."

State Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE

You do not need proof of abuse or neglect to make a report. Investigators are required to make that determination.

What Will Happen When You Make the Call?

Counselors who answer the hotline will ask about the child and the situation. Be prepared to give the child's full name and approximate age, information on how to find the child and family, and the specific signs of abuse or neglect you have observed. You don't have to give your name, but it can help investigators to contact you later for further information.

Under Florida Law 39.202, the name of the reporter shall be held confidential.

What Will Happen to the Child?

Reporting child abuse does not mean the child will automatically be removed from his or her home. Child protective services and the courts are set up to keep families together whenever possible. But they do provide emergency shelter and care outside the home when needed. If removal from the home is necessary to ensure the child's safety, the first choice of placement will be with appropriate relatives or someone known to the children. Children are placed in foster care only when there are no other options to keep a child safe.

By making the report you may save a child - and a family. Keeping child abuse secret protects the offender. Making the report enables a child and family to get help and protects the child from further abuse. Remember - children rarely are abused just once.

The longer the abuse goes on, the more harm it does to the child. If you suspect a child is in a dangerous situation, take immediate action. Call the state child abuse hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Child Advocacy Center
P.O. Box 13454
Gainesville, FL 32604
(352) 376-9161



CHILD ABUSE



It's Not A Pretty Picture

A Guide to Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse



Reporting Child Abuse — It Is Your Responsibility!

More than 4,000 children are victims of child abuse each year in Alachua County. You can help protect a child from abuse.

Child abuse affects children of every age, race and income. It is usually committed in the home by a person the child knows and trusts. A parent, other relative, baby-sitter, or friend of the family may abuse a child. Children rarely are abused just once. Rather, abuse is a behavior pattern. Most abusers don't hurt or neglect a child on purpose. Many abusers were themselves abused or neglected. Child abuse victims are six times more likely to become abusive parents than non-abused children.

Often, abusers are ordinary people caught in stressful situations: young mothers and fathers unprepared for the responsibilities of raising a child; overwhelmed single parents with no support system; families placed under great stress by poverty, divorce, or sickness; parents with alcohol and/or drug problems.

Recognizing Child Abuse

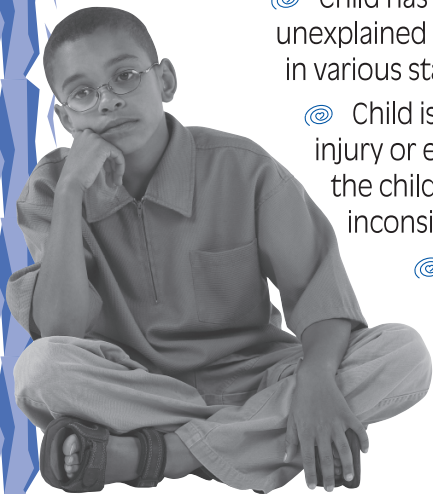
A first step in helping an abused or neglected child is to learn the symptoms of child abuse. While no one symptom speaks of abuse, two or more indicate possible abuse and should cause you to take a closer look.

Signs of Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is intentional injury inflicted upon a child. It may include severe shaking, beating, kicking, punching, or burning.

Possible Symptoms:

- ☉ Child has broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns or welts in various stages of healing.
- ☉ Child is unable to explain injury or explanations given by the child or caretaker are inconsistent with the injury.
- ☉ Child is unusually frightened of parent or caretaker, afraid to go home.
- ☉ Child reports intentional injury by parent or caretaker.



Signs of Physical Neglect

Neglect occurs when the parent fails to provide a child with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or proper supervision.

Possible Symptoms:

- ☉ Child shows signs of malnutrition – begs, steals or hoards food.
- ☉ Child has poor hygiene: matted hair, dirty skin & severe body odor.
- ☉ Child has unattended physical or medical problems.
- ☉ Child states that no one is home to provide care.
- ☉ Child or caretaker abuses drugs and/or alcohol.



Signs of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult exploits a child for sexual gratification. Sexual abuse is not limited to intercourse. Exposing oneself to a child and fondling a child's genitals are considered sexual abuse. So is using a child for production of pornographic materials.

Possible Symptoms:

- ☉ Child has pain and/or bleeding in anal or genital area: redness, swelling.
- ☉ Child displays age-inappropriate play with toys, self, or others.
- ☉ Child has inappropriate knowledge about sex.
- ☉ Child reports sexual abuse.

Signs of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may occur when a parent fails to provide the understanding, warmth, attention, and supervision the child needs for healthy psychological growth.

Possible Symptoms:

- ☉ Parent or caretaker constantly criticizes, humiliates, and/or insults a child with no evidence of love, support or guidance.
- ☉ Child exhibits extremes in behavior from overly aggressive to overly passive.
- ☉ Child displays delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development.