

When to Report Issues to Child Protective Service

If you suspect a child or adolescent is being neglected or abused, it is important you report your suspicions right away. Failure to do so can result in harm to that child or adolescent. The following is designed to help you understand how to detect child abuse and when you should report your suspicions.

What is Child Abuse?

Legally the definition of child abuse can be any one of the following:

- When a person causes a physical injury to a child intentionally.
- When a person abuses a child sexually including sexual exploitation and sexual assault.
- When a person is willfully cruel to a child or punishes a child unjustifiably.
- When a person severely or generally neglects a child and the child's needs.

What are Some Indicators of Abuse?

In many cases it is easy to determine whether a child has been abused. These are some common indicators.

- The child has burns, bruises, cuts, or swelling on his/her body that seem to have been caused intentionally.
- There are handprints, belt marks, pinch marks, or bite marks on the child's body.
- The child explains that an abusive person caused the injury.
- The injuries are unusual for that child's age group.
- The injuries are not explainable or there are conflicting explanations for the child's injuries.
- The child acts fearful, compliant, or passive.
- The child's caretaker tries to conceal the child's injuries.

Is Neglect Considered Child Abuse?

Neglect occurs when the child's caretaker neglects treatment or provides maltreatment to the child, which causes harm to the child's health or wellbeing. This is a list of some common indicators of neglect.

- The caretaker has not provided the child with adequate dental or medical care.
- The child appears hungry or lethargic on a regular basis.
- The child is consistently dirty or not dressed appropriately for various weather conditions.
- It is obvious that the child is not provided with consistent supervision.
- The child's home poses health risks.

Who Do I Contact?

If you suspect a child is being abused or has been abused it is crucial that you report it right away. It is recommended that you contact the Social Services Agency directly at (714) 940-1000 or toll-free at (800) 207-4464. These phone lines are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If the child is a family member or a close loved one it is important you also seek experienced legal representation right away.

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