

# **Protecting Our Children**

**Recognizing the Signs**

- **Child/youth:** An individual who has not attained the age of eighteen (18). For the purposes of reporting as outlined in this training a minor shall also include an individual over the age of 18 who habitually lacks the use of reason.

**definition**



*What are some of the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse that I ought to watch for if I suspect a child or youth has been or is being abused?*

**Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**

- The **first step** in **helping abused or neglected children**:
  - Learn to recognize the **signs of child abuse and neglect.**
- The **second step**:
  - Learn to recognize the **signs and traits of a possible abuser.**

The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring nor that someone is an abuser. A closer look at the situation is warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

***Signs and Symptoms of Abuse***

# The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home

## **Recognizing Child Abuse**

**The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect**

## Types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** includes any types of physical assaults (such as striking, kicking, biting, throwing, burning, or poisoning) that caused, or could have caused, serious physical injury to the child.
- **Sexual abuse:** includes any act of vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse; vaginal or anal penetrations; and other forms of inappropriate touching, exhibitionism for sexual gratification, or acts of sexual exploitation performed by an adult with a child

## Types of abuse:

- **Emotional abuse:** involves any physical or emotional assaults (such as torture or close confinement) that caused or could have caused serious psychological injury to the child.

**Neglect:** involves a failure to provide the basic necessities (such as food, clothing, hygiene, and shelter) for a child, and/or a lack of appropriate care for a child including grossly inadequate parental supervision or ethical guidance, or grossly inadequate attention to the child's physical, medical, psychological, emotional, or educational needs

## Types of abuse:

- **Pornography:** involves the acquisition, possession and distribution of pornographic images of children.



The following slides discuss signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect.

It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone.

A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

## **Types of Abuse**

Consider the possibility of **physical abuse** when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, cuts, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents or another adult caregiver and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

**Signs of Physical Abuse**

## Consider the possibility of **neglect** when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Beggars or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has noticeable body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

## **Signs of Neglect**

## Consider the possibility of **sexual abuse** when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Runs away
- Is abandoned (forgetful or consistent tardiness with transportation) by parent or adult caregiver.

## **Signs of Sexual Abuse**

## Consider the possibility of **emotional maltreatment** when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

## **Signs of Emotional Maltreatment**

- This material, about abuse, mirrors Circle of Grace and is taken from [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) .
- Responsible adults should ask open ended questions when making an inquiry. Example of a good open ended question:
  - **Ask:** How did you get that bruise? **Instead of:** Did you fall down?
- When a child makes a disclosure be careful of your reaction – shock, disgust could possibly cause the young person to minimize or stop the disclosure.

**Talking about it**

- Those who suspect abuse or neglect are obligated to make verbal report to the agency:

**1-800-RI-Child**

**Mandated Reporting Law**

- Rhode Island state law imposes an affirmative duty on all persons who have reasonable cause to know or suspect that abuse or neglect of a child has occurred to make a report of this, **within 24 hours**, to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (R.I.G.L. 40-11-3).
- The report must be made in “good faith,” i.e. any reasonable person, given the same information, would draw a conclusion that abuse or neglect may have occurred. Any person making a report in good faith has immunity from liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed.
- A good faith reporter will have the same immunity with respect to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from such a report (R.I.G.L. 40-11-4).

## **DUTY TO REPORT**



Failure to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect **is a violation** of the law (R.I.G.L. 40-11-6-1).

**DUTY TO REPORT**

It is diocesan policy that sexual misconduct or the failure to report an observation or complaint of sexual misconduct is a violation of an **employee's** obligations of employment and one's commitment to Christian service.

In the case of **volunteers**, such behavior is considered to be a violation of one's responsibility to those whom they serve.

## Reporting Requirements

If an **employee** or **volunteer** observes or receives a complaint of an individual's sexual misconduct, he/she shall record:

- the date and time of the observation or of the communication of the complaint and
- the name, address and telephone number of the person communicating the complaint.

## Reporting Requirements

A **report** of the observation or complaint **shall be made immediately** to:

- the local authority (Agency Director, Pastor, Principal) or to the immediate supervisor of the employee or volunteer.
- Supervisory personnel shall then immediately inform the Area of Mission Secretary, in the case of diocesan offices or agencies, or the Moderator of the Curia who shall in turn notify the coordinator of the Office of Education and Compliance.

## **Reporting Requirements**

***Important Numbers to Know:***

**Office of Education and Compliance**  
call **401-941-0760**

**Office of Outreach and Prevention,**  
call **401-946-0728**

80 Saint Mary's Drive  
Cranston, RI 02920

**Investigations / Pastoral Outreach**

# Resource Information and Websites

- Diocese of Providence:
  - [www.dioceseofprovidence.org](http://www.dioceseofprovidence.org)
- United States Catholic Conference of Bishops:
  - [www.usccb.org/ocyp](http://www.usccb.org/ocyp)
- Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families
  - [www.dcyf.ri.gov](http://www.dcyf.ri.gov)