



CHILD ABUSE REPORTING AND PREVENTION

As a professional that works with children, it is essential to know what to do in a case of child abuse or neglect. In accordance with the Texas Family Code (Sec. 261.101), any adult that suspects a child is being abused or neglected has a legal obligation to report it. Professional reporters must make the report within 48 hours. A professional reporter is anyone who is licensed or certified by state or works for an agency or facility licensed or certified by the state and has contact with children as a result of their normal duties.

RECOGNIZE There are numerous signs that a child may be experiencing abuse or neglect. Below are just a few indicators. For a more comprehensive list, please contact Education Services, at @centerforchildprotection.org or call 512-472-1164.

Physical Abuse - unexplained or repeated injuries, bruises and burns; injuries that regularly appear after school absence, weekend or vacation; fear of medical help, fear of physical contact; withdraws from activities; threatens or attempts self-harm or suicide

Neglect - begs, steals, hides or hoards food; lacks needed medical care; consistently fatigued/falls asleep in class; poor hygiene, body weight and height significantly below average; reports no caretaker or inconsistent caretaker at home

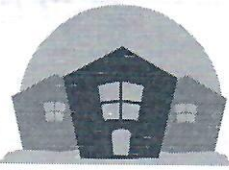
Sexual Abuse - exhibits physical signs of difficulty walking or sitting; reports nightmares or bedwetting; withdraws from activities and others; describes or acts out sexual behavior beyond normal for age; shows extremes in behavior, discloses abuse

REACT Remain calm, believe the child, allow the child to talk, show interest and concern, reassure and support the child, take action. Respect the child's privacy, be supportive not judgmental and document exact quotes. Do not panic or overreact, press the child to talk, promise anything you can't control, confront the offender, blame the child or overwhelm the child with questions. Never tell the child you won't tell anyone.

REPORT For life threatening or emergency situations, call your local law enforcement agency or 911 immediately, and then make a report to DFPS at 1-800-252-5400.

For non-emergency reports, there are two options for reporting abuse, neglect and exploitation to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Call the **Abuse Hotline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free 1-800-252-5400 from anywhere in the US to report abuse or neglect that occurred in Texas or you may make a report online at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>**. If you have trouble or questions about making a report on the website, call 512-929-6784 or 1- 800-252-5400 for help.

PREVENT Schedule training for your staff, club or friends on Prevention, Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect. Please contact the Education Services Department at training@centerforchildprotection.org or call (512) 472-1164 with inquiries and training requests.



CENTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION
a children's advocacy center

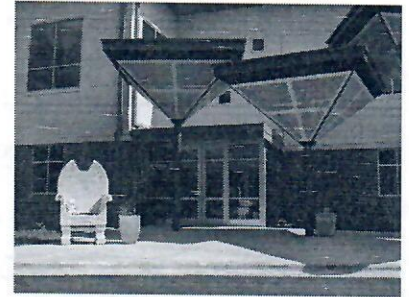
Child Abuse & Neglect Identification and Reporting



Center for Child Protection
a children's advocacy center

The mission of the Center is to reduce the trauma for children during the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases in Travis County through specialized services and treatment.

Additionally, the Center strives to educate the community on the identification of child abuse, so that together, the cycle of abuse will end with a new generation.



Four Objectives

1. **Identification-** What do I Look for?
2. **Outcry-** A Child Has Disclosed, Now What?
3. **Reporting-** What Information do I Need?
4. **Investigation-** What Happens Next?



Identification

1. **Physical Abuse**
2. **Neglect**
3. **Sexual Abuse**



Signs & Symptoms



- Signs and symptoms alone do not confirm abuse.
- Understanding family dynamics and child development are critical to abuse and neglect assessments.
- Trauma is a subjective experience. Many, but not all, victims exhibit signs of trauma.



Physical Abuse: Physical Warning Signs

Frequent Physical Injuries

- bruises, cuts, black eyes or burns without adequate explanations
- Injuries in various stages of healing
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to the arms and legs

Unusual Burns or Bruises

- Unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite
- Cigarette burns on any part of the body

Frequent Complaints

- pain without obvious injury





A Child Discloses Abuse: Now What?

Some Do's & Don'ts...



**DON'T SHOW YOUR
"FREAK-OUT" FACE!**

&

**DON'T MAKE
ANY PROMISES!**



IMPORTANT TO-DO'S

- ✓ 1. Remain calm
- ✓ 2. Believe the child
- ✓ 3. Assure the child that they are not to blame and did the right thing by telling
- ✓ 4. Let the child tell their story but leave the questioning to the professionals
- ✓ 5. File a report within 48 hours



The Process

- Provide Empathic Listening (this builds trust, reduces tension, and is non-judgmental)



- Talk to each child/victim separately; think about privacy
- Do not include the alleged suspect in the interview
- Let the child tell the story in their own words; use their vocabulary
- Be discreet; do not disclose outcry indiscriminately



USE WORDS ONLY!



- Do NOT use anatomically correct dolls or drawings
- Do NOT use other dolls or animals for description
- Do NOT record an outcry or statement



Types of Questions

- Use only the information the child provides
- Let the child tell the story in their own words
- Open-ended, non-leading questions (cannot be answered with "yes" or "no")
- Use their words when clarifying information

"Tell me again who we are talking about? Your dad?
What is your dad's name?"



Types of Investigations



CRIMINAL

- Investigated by law enforcement agencies
- Crimes defined by the Texas Penal Code
- Jurisdiction is located where the offense occurred

CIVIL

- Investigated by Child Protective Services
- Allegations defined by the Texas Family Code
- Jurisdiction is located wherever the child resides

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Child Protection Team (CPT)

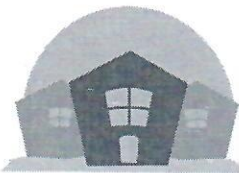


It takes a team to protect a child.

CenterForChildProtection.org

- Law Enforcement
- Child Protective Services
- Prosecution
- Medical
- Children's Advocacy Centers & Community

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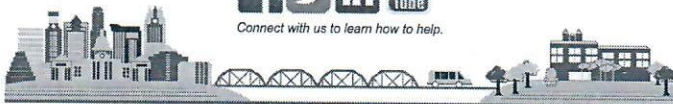
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Education Services Department

training@centerforchildprotection.org



Connect with us to learn how to help.



References

1. It's Up To You www.dfps.state.tx.us/itsuptoyou
2. Helping in Child Protective Services; General Characteristics of Maltreating Families
3. Darkness to Light; www.darkness2light.org
4. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services; www.dfps.state.tx.us
5. How to Respond to and Outcry of Abuse; Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas; www.cactx.org
6. Checklist of Grooming, Controlling, Silencing, and Maintenance Behaviors, Colorado Department of Public Safety; www.dcj.state.co.us
7. Department of Family and Protective Services: Recognizing Abuse or Neglect <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting/recognizing.asp>
8. Texas Constitution and Statutes: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/>
9. Child Welfare Information Gateway: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

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Be Prepared

Prepare the Child

- Tell him/her that there may be others who need this information

Prepare Yourself

- Practice in advance with colleagues

"I want to be prepared if a child tells me he/she is being abused. Let's practice."

"Ok, I will make an outcry and you appropriately respond."



Gather Information

Only gather enough information to report



- When did this specific event happen?
- Does the alleged suspect have access to the child?
- Where can the child be located?



What to Report

1. Child's name, age, address
2. Parent's, siblings, household members
3. Specific allegations or situation
4. Current injuries, medical or behavioral problems
5. Child's access to the alleged suspect
6. Collateral information

*You do not have to know answers to all of these questions to make a report.



Reporting

- The law requires reporting in cases where abuse or neglect is suspected
- The law does not permit delegation of reporting
- There are no privileged communications
- Reporters name is confidential



Report. It's the Law.

Section 261.101: Requirement to Report (Texas Family Code)

A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report. A professional, including teachers, nurses, doctors, and day care employees shall make a report not later than the 48th hour after the hour the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected. A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.

The requirement to report applies without exception to an individual whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, including an attorney, a member of clergy, a medical practitioner, a social worker, and a mental health professional.



Where to Report

Child Abuse Hotline

- 1-800-252-5400
- <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

Emergency

- 911

Treatment Facility:

- DSHS: 1-888-973-0022



Suspect? → Report!



Physical Abuse: Behavioral Warning Signs



- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- OR
- passive, withdrawn and emotionless behavior
- Somatic Complaints: stomach aches that appear at a certain time of day



Neglect

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: *Physical Neglect* is defined as the failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child

Excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused



Neglect



Physical Neglect:

- Lack of food or shelter
- Obvious malnourishment or emaciation
- Stealing or begging for food
- Compulsive scavenging, for example, hoarding food
- Poor personal hygiene, dirty skin, lice, etc.
- Clothing that is dirty, too small or too big, torn, etc.
- Attachment disorders

Medical Neglect:

- Lack of medical care: Need for glasses, dental or other medical attention

Neglectful Supervision:

- Lack of appropriate supervision
- Child unattended for long periods of time; making decisions beyond their developmental age



Sexual Abuse: Physical Warning Signs



- Pain in the genital area
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bladder or vaginal infections
- Pregnancy



Sexual Abuse: Behavioral Warning Signs

- Extreme fear of being alone with specific adults or a certain gender
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Sexual victimization of other children
- Regression
- Nightmares
- Fire-Starting
- Promiscuity
- Outcry*



Sexual Abuse: The Grooming Process



- Builds trust for both parents & children to gain access to children.
- Designed to elicit participation and prevent the child from telling.