

Child Abuse

Information for

Washington State University Extension Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers



How Do I Report Suspected Child Abuse?

WSU EXTENSION FACULTY, STAFF, and VOLUNTEERS who witness or suspect abuse are legally responsible to ensure that a verbal or written report is made to Child Protective Services or local law enforcement within **48 hours**. Additionally, volunteers need to report to their County Extension Director, other County Extension faculty, or Extension Program Assistant.

Who Is Required To Report Child Abuse?

WSU EXTENSION FACULTY, STAFF, and VOLUNTEERS are required by law to report suspected or witnessed child abuse/neglect.

After a Report Is Made*

A member of the local Child Protective Services or local law enforcement will investigate the case, notify the family a report has been filed, and check the child's condition. If the child appears to be in immediate danger, he or she is put into temporary protective custody.

In severe cases, the court determines whether temporary or permanent separation from the family is necessary.

Treatment for the child and/or family may be recommended or mandated.

Contacts and Phone Numbers

County Extension Office

Contact: _____

Phone: _____

County Department of Social and Health Services (CPS)

Contact: _____

Phone: _____

Local Law Enforcement Agency

Contact: _____

Phone: _____

*Policies and procedures vary from county to county. For more information on reporting and follow-up procedures, contact your local Child Protective Services.

Chart adapted from Broadhurst, Diane D., "The Educator's Role in the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect," the Users' Manual Series. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Washington, DC, 1979, DREW No. (Ohds 79-30172).

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What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse and neglect are the injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child by any person who harms the child's health, welfare, or safety.

Physical abuse: Any nonaccidental physical injury to a child.

Sexual abuse: Sexual exploitation or other sexual conduct or contact performed to gratify sexual desire.

Neglect: An act or omission that constitutes a clear and present danger to a child's health, welfare, or safety.

Emotional maltreatment: Belittling and rejecting the child, and failure to provide a positive atmosphere. (This is not covered in Washington State laws; however, WSU Extension volunteers working with youth are expected to be good role models and help them understand and practice acceptable behavior.)

How Do I Respond to a Child Who Discloses?

DO

- believe the child and be supportive
- be on the same eye level
- reassure the child that it is okay to tell what happened
- listen to the child
- rephrase important thoughts—use the child's vocabulary
- tell the child help is available
- let the child know you must report it to someone who can help him or her
- trust your "gut" feelings
- report to local WSU Extension personnel

DON'T

- promise confidentiality
- panic or express shock
- ask leading or suggestive questions
- make negative comments about alleged perpetrator
- disclose information indiscriminately

It is NOT the responsibility of, or appropriate for, WSU Extension VOLUNTEERS, STAFF, or FACULTY to conduct child abuse/neglect investigations.

How Do I Recognize Child Abuse?

	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unexplained bruises, welts, or burns in various stages of healing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – reflecting shape of article (electric cord, belt buckle, bite mark, cigarette burn) – regularly appear after absence or vacation • unexplained fractures, lacerations, or abrasions • injuries inconsistent with information from child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wary of physical contact by adults • behavioral extremes—aggressive or withdrawn • complains of soreness or discomfort • wears clothing inappropriate to weather • reports injury by parents or others • arrives early at meetings or events, and stays late, as if afraid to go home • chronically runs away (adolescents)
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene • consistent lack of supervision, especially for long periods • abandonment • unattended physical problems or medical needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • begs for, or steals food • constant fatigue or listlessness, falls asleep during meetings • substance abuse • delinquency, self-destructive • frequently absent or tardy to meetings or events • reports no caretaker at home
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • torn, stained, or bloody underclothes • difficulty walking or sitting • bruises or bleeding in external genitalia • pain or itching in genital area • venereal disease • pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withdrawn, chronic depression, poor self-esteem • threatened by physical contact or closeness • inappropriate sexual behavior or premature knowledge of sex • reports sexual abuse by caretaker • poor peer relationships • suicide attempts (adolescents) • chronically runs away (adolescents)
Emotional Maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speech disorders • delayed physical development • substance abuse • ulcers, asthma, severe allergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habit disorders (sucking, rocking) • antisocial, destructive • neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play) • behavior extremes (passive or aggressive) • overly adaptive behavior (inappropriately adult or infantile) • developmentally delayed mentally and emotionally • suicide attempts (adolescents)
<p>A single indicator does not prove that abuse is taking place, but the repeated presence of an indicator or a combination of indicators should alert educators to the possibility of abuse. Often there are no visible indicators.</p>		