

KNOW BEFORE YOU KNOCK

Every child and family has unique aspects of their situation, experience, and diagnosis. This page is intended to provide a general overview but is not attempting to represent every situation or child you encounter. Every family deserves your expertise to assess and adapt your prior knowledge. This resource is best viewed electronically.

DEFINITION

General child maltreatment is defined as:

"any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation (including sexual abuse as determined under section 111), or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm." (1)

For definitions of the specific kinds of abuse and neglect please visit: [Child Abuse and Neglect: AAP Policy Explained - HealthyChildren.org](#)

PREVALENCE

- "20,923 screened in CPS referrals in WI in 2023" (2)
- "an average of 26.3 maltreatment reports per 1000 children in WI" (2)
- "Children ages 0-3 are most susceptible to physical abuse and serious injuries. Every day, five children die from child abuse. Most children are under three years old." (3)

CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAY IMPACT SERVICES

- Child may either be slow to warm, or overly affectionate
- Living situation - with biological parents or in protective custody
- Type of abuse may produce different responses and behaviors
- Caregiver may benefit from additional support to understand that behaviors are communication
- [Know when to reach out to child protective services if you have concerns about a family](#)

LANGUAGE

Ok to Use:

- Help parents understand the importance of using accurate words for body parts. (5)
- It's important to continue to talk about the experience the child has been through in an age-appropriate way. (6)(7)

Avoid:

- Negative talk about non-custodial parents.
- Using non-anatomically correct words for body parts.
- Disregarding a child's trauma because of their age "they won't remember, they're so young." (8)(9)(10)

NATIONAL/STATE ORGS

National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

"OUR MISSION is to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families and communities throughout the United States."

TOP RESOURCES

- [Contributing Factors to Abuse and Neglect | Children's Wisconsin](#)
- [Mandated Child Abuse and Neglect Reporters | Wisconsin Department of Children and Families](#)
- [Child abuse - Symptoms & Causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Booklist](#) to support children who've experienced traumas.
- [Psychosocial and Environmental Stressors for the Identified Infant/Young Child](#) - This document provides a comprehensive list to help providers and families understand more of the factors that can affect a child's social-emotional development.
- [Child Parent Psychotherapy \(CPP\) Provider Roster](#) - Clinicians that have gone through training and are guaranteed to have Infant Mental Health knowledge - be sure to filter to just WI.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- "Changes in behavior — such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity..."
- Sleep problems and nightmares
- An apparent lack of supervision
- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, broken bones (fractures) or burns
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation
- Injuries that aren't compatible with the child's developmental ability
- Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- Appears to desperately seek affection
- Loss of previously acquired developmental skills
- Poor growth
- Poor personal cleanliness
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- Hoarding or stealing food

The Parent May:

- Show little concern for the child
- Appear unable to recognize physical or emotional distress in the child
- Blame the child for the problems
- Consistently belittle or berate the child..." (4)

REFERENCE LIST

ABUSE & NEGLECT