

Module 7: Healthy Practices (Part I)

Handout 2: The Professional's Role

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

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

The Child:

- ☐ Shows sudden changes in behavior or performance
- ☐ Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parent's 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- ☐ Is overly compliant, passive or withdrawn
- ☐ Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- ☐ Offers conflicting explanations as to how the injury occurred
- ☐ Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- ☐ Is frightened of the parents 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

The Parent or other Adult Caregiver:

- ☐ Shows little concern for the child
- ☐ Denies the existence of- or blames the child for- the child's problems in school or at home
- ☐ Asks providers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- ☐ Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- ☐ Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- ☐ Looks primarily to the child for care, attention and satisfaction of emotional needs
- ☐ Offers conflicting, unconvincing or no explanation for the child's injury
- ☐ Describes the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way
- ☐ Uses harsh physical discipline with the child

The Parent and Child Together:

- ☐ Rarely touch or look at each other
- ☐ Consider their relationship entirely negative



Responding to the child in concerns of abuse and neglect

DO:

- ☐ Remain calm. A child may retract information or stop talking if he/she senses a strong reaction.
- ☐ Find a private place to talk without interruptions.
- ☐ Put the child at ease by sitting near him/her.
- ☐ Ask permission before touching the child. Touch may be associated with physical or emotional pain in children who have been physically or sexually abused.
- ☐ Reassure the child that he/she is not in trouble.
- ☐ Use the child's vocabulary.
- ☐ Support the child: "I am sorry that happened to you."
- ☐ Do what you can to make certain that the child is safe from further abuse.

DO NOT:

- ☐ Press for details. You do not need to prove abuse or neglect.
- ☐ Ask "why" questions. These questions require children to explain actions that they may not understand.
- ☐ Promise that you will not tell anyone about the child's disclosure.
- ☐ Ask leading or suggestive questions.
- ☐ Make angry or critical comments about the alleged perpetrator. The child often knows, loves, or likes this person.
- ☐ Disclose information indiscriminately, keeping in mind the child's right to privacy.
- ☐ Make the child feel different or singled out.
- ☐ Investigate a case yourself. Call the police or CPS.

