

Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

NCPANDA

What is P.A.N.D.A.?

P.A.N.D.A. stands for Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness. The P.A.N.D.A. program aims to educate dental professionals, and others, about how to identify warning signs of child abuse and neglect.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is the infliction of physical, mental or emotional injury or the causing of a deterioration of a child and may include, but shall not be limited to, failing to maintain reasonable care and treatment, negligent treatment or maltreatment, or exploiting a child to the extent that the child's health or emotional well-being is endangered. Sexual abuse is included in this law. These acts include physical abuse resulting in an injury, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, physical neglect and/or inadequate supervision, and/or sexual abuse and exploitation.

What are the physical indicators of child abuse?

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. Please familiarize yourself with the warning signs listed below. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; 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. These warning signs or indicators should be considered in light of explanations provided (by the child and the parent) or medical history.

BRUISES & BITES

- Bruises of any kind on an infant, especially facial bruises
- Bruises on the posterior side of a child's body
- Bruises in patterns that might reflect the pattern of the object use (outline of a hand or paired bruises from pinching, belt buckle, coat hanger, paddle or strap)
- Clustered bruises indicating repeated contact with a hand or instrument

- Human bite marks

BURNS

- Cigarette burns
- Immersion burns indicating dunking in a hot liquid ("sock" or "glove" burns on the hands or feet)
- Dry burns indicating that a child has been forced to sit on a hot surface or has had a hot implement applied to skin
- Rope burns indicating confinement

HEAD INJURIES

- Absence of hair and/or hemorrhaging beneath the scalp due to vigorous hair pulling
- Loosened, fractured or missing teeth
- Jaw and nasal fractures
- Evidence in mouth of venereal diseases or of forced oral sex (sexual abuse)

LACERATIONS & ABRASIONS

- Lacerations of the lip, eye or any portion of a child's face
- Lacerations of the maxillary labial fermium

SKELETAL INJURIES

- Rib fractures
- Fractures of the mandible, sternum or scapulae
- Skull trauma
- Spinal shaft fracture or spinal trauma
- Recurrent injury to same site

INJURIES CAUSED BY TWISTING OR PULLING

- Metaphyseal or corner fractures of long bones
- Epiphyseal separation
- Periosteal elevation
- Spiral fractures



What are the behavioral indicators of child abuse?

Children who are abused physically or emotionally display certain types of behavior. Many of these are common to all children at one time or another, but when they are present in sufficient number and strength to characterize a child's overall manner, they may indicate abuse.

- Wary of adult contact
- Apprehensive when others cry
- Frightened of parents
- Afraid to go home
- Overly compliant, passive, undemanding behaviors, which are aimed at avoiding any possible confrontation with the abuser
- Extremely aggressive, demanding and rageful behaviors. Sometimes hyperactive, caused by frustration or a desire to get attention
- Role-reversed "parental" behavior or extremely dependent behavior when abusive parents turn to their child to satisfy their own needs or try to keep their child dependent long after a child in a healthy family would be more self-reliant
- Lags in development of motor skills, toilet training, socialization or language which may be caused by the children having to siphon off energy which is normally channeled toward growth, into protecting themselves. Developmental lags may be the result of central nervous system damage from physical abuse, medical or nutritional neglect, or inadequate stimulation

DENTAL NEGLECT

Dental neglect includes the willful failure by a parent or guardian to seek and obtain appropriate treatment for caries and infections or any other condition of the teeth or supporting structures that:

- Make routine eating difficult or impossible
- Causes chronic pain
- Delays a child's growth or development
- Makes it difficult for a child to perform daily activities such as playing, working or going to school

INDICATORS OF DENTAL NEGLECT

- Untreated rampant cavities, easily detected by a layperson
- Untreated pain, infection, bleeding or trauma affecting the orofacial region

OTHER INDICATORS OF ABUSE & NEGLECT

- Child is dirty, unkempt or demonstrates poor personal hygiene
- Child is dressed inappropriately for weather conditions (e.g. a child is being covered up to conceal bruises or injuries)
- There is evidence of poor supervision, such as repeated falls down stairs, repeated ingestions of harmful substances, child is cared for by another child or is unsupervised under any circumstances (left in car or street, etc.)
- Remember that mentally or physically disabled children are very vulnerable and are often targets for abuse because of the difficulty in dealing with their needs
- Laceration of liver, spleen or pancreas
- Renal injury
- Rigid abdomen; tenderness of abdomen

If you Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect:

Contact your local Department of Social Services or Law Enforcement Agency

