



Girls Incorporated®

OF LIMESTONE, ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION
AND INTERVENTION
POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

Child abuse can mean physically hurting a child, sexually exploiting a child, failing to provide proper care, or depriving a child of emotional or developmental needs. Child abuse can be a one-time occurrence or a pattern of abuse.

There are four major types of abuse and neglect: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

Physical abuse is the deliberate application of force to any part of a child's body, which results or may result in a non-accidental injury. It may involve hitting a child a single time, or it may involve a pattern of incidents. Physical abuse also includes behaviour such as shaking, choking, biting, kicking, burning or poisoning a child, holding a child under water, or any other harmful or dangerous use of force or restraint. Child abuse is usually connected to physical punishment or is confused with child discipline. Other examples include continual or lengthy beating, slapping, or whipping; hitting with fist; twisting, dropping, bludgeoning, scalding, suffocating, or using weapons, etc.

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or youth uses a child for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. It also includes sexual harassment. The Criminal Code identifies forms of sexual abuse that also include sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, a parent or guardian procuring sexual activity from a child, a householder permitting sexual activity, exposing genitals to a child with sexual intent, and sexual assault.

Emotional abuse or maltreatment harms a child's sense of self, and involves acts or omissions by the parent or caregiver that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. Examples of emotional maltreatment include verbal threats and put-downs, forcing a child into social isolation, intimidating, exploiting, terrorizing or routinely making unreasonable demands on a child. Exposure to domestic violence and conflict arising out of custody and access disputes often presents risks of emotional harm to children. Emotional abuse typically has been a difficult form of abuse to define, because it often does not involve a specific incident or visible injury and its effects may not surface until later in the child's development.

Child neglect occurs when a child's parents or other caregivers are not providing the necessities of a child's emotional, psychological and physical development. Physical neglect occurs when a child's needs for food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care and protection from harm are not adequately met. Emotional neglect occurs when a child's need to feel loved, wanted, safe and worthy is not met. Emotional neglect can range from cases in which the caregiver is simply unavailable, to cases in which the caregiver openly rejects the child. Medical neglect includes situations where the parent or caregiver does not provide, refuses to provide, or was unable to consent to medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate a child's physical harm or suffering. Educational neglect occurs when caregivers knowingly allow chronic truancy, fail to enroll a child or repeatedly keep a child at home from school.

INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

The signs and indicators of abuse and neglect may include but are not limited to those that follow.

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator is not conclusive proof that a child has been abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators.

Physical abuse is any harm to a child caused by an action or omission of action by the child's caregiver. Injuries may include:

- bruises
- welts
- cuts
- fractures
- burns
- internal injuries.

Physical abuse can be one or two isolated incidents or can occur over a prolonged period of time.

Psychological and Behavioural Indicators:

- cannot recall how injuries occurred or offers an inconsistent explanation
- wary of adults
- may cringe or flinch if touched unexpectedly
- infants may display a vacant stare
- extremely aggressive or extremely withdrawn
- indiscriminately seeks affection
- extremely compliant and/or eager to please

Physical Indicators:

- injuries that are not consistent with explanation
- presence of several injuries that are in various stages of healing
- presence of various injuries over a period of time
- facial injuries in infants and preschool children
- injuries inconsistent with the child's age and developmental phase

INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

The signs and indicators of sexual abuse may include but are not limited to those that follow.

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator is not conclusive proof that a child has been sexually abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators.

Sexual abuse is any sexual exploitation of a child by an older person where the child is being used for a sexual purpose.

Behavioural Indicators:

- age inappropriate play with toys, self or others displaying explicit sexual acts
- age inappropriate sexually explicit drawing and/or descriptions
- bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- prostitution
- seductive behaviours

Physical Indicators:

- unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area
- torn, stained or bloody underwear (may be observed if the child needs bathroom assistance)
- pregnancy
- injuries to the genital or anal areas, e.g., bruising, swelling or infection
- sexually transmitted diseases

INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The signs and indicators of emotional abuse may include but are not limited to those that follow.

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator is not conclusive proof that a child has been abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators.

Emotional abuse includes all acts of omission or commission that result in the absence of a nurturing environment for the child. It occurs when the caregiver continually treats the child in such a negative way that the child's concept of "self" is seriously impaired. Emotionally abusive behaviour by the caregiver can include constant yelling; demeaning remarks; rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child; or terrorizing the child. Emotional abuse can be the most difficult to identify and prove.

Behavioural Indicators:

- severe depression
- extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness
- overly compliant, too well mannered, too neat or clean
- extreme attention seeking
- displays extreme inhibition in play

Physical Indicators:

- bed wetting that is non-medical in origin
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, headaches, nausea, abdominal pains
- child fails to thrive

INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

The signs and indicators of neglect may include but are not limited to those that follow.

It is important to realize that the presence of any one indicator is not conclusive proof that a child has been abused. In most instances, abused children will exhibit a number of behavioural and physical indicators.

Most caregivers do not intend to neglect their children. It usually results from ignorance about appropriate care for children or an ability to plan ahead.

Neglect occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs such as adequate food, sleep, safety, supervision, clothing or medical treatment.

Behavioural Indicators:

- pale, listless, unkempt
- frequent absence from school
- inappropriate clothing for the weather, dirty clothes
- engaged in delinquent acts, alcohol/drug abuse
- frequently forgets a lunch

Physical Indicators:

- poor hygiene
- unattended physical problems or medical needs, e.g., dental work, glasses
- consistent lack of supervision

GIRLS INC. PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. All new Friend for Life or Friend for a Day Mentors, program delivery volunteers or cooperative students with Girls Inc. Limestone are required to review this document with an agency staff person and understand her obligation and the process involved related to recognition, protocol for consultation or reporting, legal issues, support techniques for handling disclosures (see *Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*), and prevention strategies.
2. Volunteers and students are required to re-visit the current agency policy annually to ensure they maintain current knowledge pertaining to recognition, protocol for consultation or reporting, legal issues, support techniques for handling disclosures (see *Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*), and prevention strategies.
3. Due to the nature of the relationship between Girls Inc. Girls and volunteers, mentoring volunteers can be instrumental in ensuring she receives valuable information related to violence issues such as bullying, dating violence, and personal safety. Keep in close contact with Girls Inc. staff to ensure your Girls Inc. Girl obtains this valuable information throughout her development.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The situations that must be reported are listed in detail below.
Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) s.72 (1)

Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect one of the following, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society:

1. The child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's,
 - i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
 - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
2. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer physical harm inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's,
 - i. failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
 - ii. pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
3. The child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child.
4. There is a risk that the child is likely to be sexually molested or sexually exploited as described in paragraph 3.
5. The child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the treatment.
6. The child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by serious,
 - i. anxiety,
 - ii. depression,
 - iii. withdrawal,
 - iv. self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or
 - v. delayed development,and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.
7. The child has suffered emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm.

8. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 resulting from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.
9. There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv or v of paragraph 6 and that the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to prevent the harm.
10. The child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition.
11. The child has been abandoned, the child's parent has died or is unavailable to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody, or the child is in a residential placement and the parent refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody.
12. The child is less than 12 years old and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, those services or treatment.
13. The child is less than 12 years old and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of the person having charge of the child or because of that person's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately.

Ongoing duty to report CFSA s.72(2)

The duty to report is an ongoing obligation. If a person has made a previous report about a child, and has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, that person must make a further report to a children's aid society.

Persons must report directly CFSA s.72(3)

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must make the report directly to a children's aid society. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf.

What are "reasonable grounds to suspect"?

You do not need to be sure that a child is or may be in need of protection to make a report to a children's aid society. "Reasonable grounds" are what an average person, given his or her training, background and experience, exercising normal and honest judgment, would suspect.

Protection from liability
CFSA s.72(7)

If a civil action is brought against a person who made a report, that person will be protected unless he or she acted maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his or her suspicion.

WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES

It is important for you to remember not to take this case into your own hands. There are people who are highly trained in dealing with these situations, and you need to make sure that this child gets the help they need. It is important for you to do the following:

Believe the child. There have always been cynics who say that children have terrific imaginations and that stories about sexual abuse are just part of their fantasy worlds. For most children, sexual abuse is not a fantasy. Children who disclose sexual abuse often do not attach the same moral values of right and wrong to the sexual event that an adult would. They may be describing something that is confusing to them, such as the promise they had to make to an adult to "never tell". A young child may be preoccupied with the concern that she has been awakened in the night to do something that is hard to understand and is a "nuisance" to a drowsy child. Often children are more upset by a threat or the psychological manipulation that has accompanied the sexual abuse than the physical nature of the violation itself.

Children who speak about sexual, physical, or emotional abuse struggle with the desire to protect their parents. They sense that by telling they will be responsible for bringing even more discomfort to their homes. Victims of all ages often believe that they are responsible for the abuse they receive and they hope the violence will just go away. They may delay the disclosure and endure the abuse a long time before telling.

As a volunteer, keep in mind that this child has come to you with something to tell due to powerful, hurting feelings. Understand that your relationship has allowed that child to open up to you. Trust that the child is speaking from a great need and open your heart to believe what you hear.

Listen calmly and openly. As the child speaks, you may be overwhelmed with your own feelings of anger, pain, and perhaps also fear. At the time of disclosure, put your own feelings aside (you will have time to explore them later). Be emotionally available to the child, and listen. Give your full attention to the child and nod understandably as the story pours out. Do not be judgmental or disparaging of the child or the parents. To ensure that others do not overhear the child's message, move away from onlookers. If you are inside, try to find another room where you will have privacy, but leave the door slightly ajar.

Reassure the child. Let the child know that you believe in him or her. You must be honest with the child by saying that you cannot keep this a secret and that there are other people who need to know. Explain that you are going to do your best to help. You cannot promise that the offender will be punished or sent away, nor can you promise that you can find another home for the child. All you can do is promise that you will do whatever you can to get the right kind of help. You know where to go for more information and how to bring the best helpers into the situation.

Try not to ask leading questions. Do not suggest interpretation or solutions that might cause problems in a court case. You do need to establish the immediacy of the danger to the child; you must not allow the child to return to a situation where his or her life would be in immediate danger. It would be best if you remained close by to provide comfort.

Write down the facts. A *Record of Disclosure* form has been included in this document for recording disclosures. You need to record the child's name, address, and telephone number. The date and place of your conversation are also important. Details of what the child has reported should be recorded using the actual words the child used. Do not try to interpret what the child said in your own words. If you do, make it clear that you are reporting as closely as possible or that you are inferring what the child said. If the child has named someone, write down the identity of that person as the child has described him/her. Include information on how to locate that person, if available. Write down as much as you know, but proceed with making a report even if you cannot complete the entire form.

It is important to remember that children often "recant" or deny having been sexually abused even after they have disclosed to an adult and steps have been taken to bring the case to court. They often do so because they feel guilty about causing trouble for the offender or because the offender has threatened them and are afraid of the consequences of telling. Sometimes children recant to protect others in their family. This kind of reversal can lead to anger and confusion on the part of those who have tried to help the child. As a volunteer who has made considerable effort to help a child abuse victim, you should explore your own feelings and convictions about the child abuse. Understand that you cannot control the events that will occur. Nevertheless, your recording of the information at the time when the child disclosed can be a very important step in the investigation process. It must be done well.

Report immediately to the Children's Aid Society. Anyone who suspects child abuse must immediately report the suspicions to a Children's Aid Society (CAS). *The person who suspects the abuse must call him/herself – no one else can help you decide if a report should be made or make the report for you.* If you have doubts or concerns about making a report of suspected child abuse, consult with a worker from the Children's Aid Society. Do not discuss your concerns with anyone else until you have consulted with a child protection worker. *Leaving a message with a Children's Aid Society isn't enough.* You must speak with an intake secretary or worker to make a report. If this is your first time calling the CAS, inform the worker that you're unfamiliar with the process. Make sure you write down the name of the worker you spoke with, and anything s/he told you to do. Although anonymous calls can be made, it is more difficult for authorities to follow-up on the case, gather information and protect the child. It is in the best interests of the child that the reporter leaves his/her identifying information. Remember, the person who reported is protected from having his/her name disclosed. As a volunteer with Girls Inc., inform agency staff immediately of your intention to call a Children's Aid Society. If new information is obtained after the first call was made, you must phone the Children's Aid worker again.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Children's Aid Society workers have a legal mandate [Child and Family Services Act, Section 15(3)] to investigate all allegations about the welfare of children. A CAS worker may, as part of the investigation and plan to protect the child, involve the police and other community agencies.

Parental consent is not required for a CAS worker to interview a child, and, in fact, parental involvement before seeing the child may jeopardize the CAS and/or police investigation and thus diminish efforts to protect the child.

HOW TO CONTACT A CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Check the telephone directory for the office closest to you. The emergency pages in most Ontario telephone directories have the number to call.

In some communities, the children's aid society is known as "family and children's services".

All children's aid societies/family and children's services have emergency service 24 hours a day, so that you can call anytime.

In Kingston, the number to call is:

City of Kingston & County of Frontenac Children's Aid Society: (613) 542-7351

In Napanee, the number to call is:

Lennox-Addington Family & Children's Services: (613) 354-9744

In Belleville, the number to call is:

Hastings Children's Aid Society: (613) 962-9291

RECORD OF CHILD ABUSE DISCLOSURE OR CONCERN

This information should be collected as detailed above.
Providing a copy of this to the CAS worker involved is a helpful tool

Date: _____ Time: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Where Parents/Guardians can be reached: _____

Incident that precipitated documenting – physical signs, verbal disclosure, etc.

Steps taken – who did you talk to and when, and what did they say, etc.

Other notes, information or people involved who might be helpful:

Your name, address and phone number so that you can be contacted:

Your relationship with the child (eg. Mentor/Group Leader) _____

Signature of Individual completing this form

Date