

# Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

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## Child Abuse Toll-Free Number

**1-800-482-5964**

(24 hours per day –  
7 days per week)

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## What Is Child Abuse and Neglect?

The Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act (12-12-501 through 12-12-518) defines who is considered to be a child and what child maltreatment is. “Child maltreatment” means abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation or abandonment.

- (a) “Child” or “juvenile” means any person under eighteen (18) years of age, whether married or single.
- (b) “Abuse” means act or omissions by a caretaker to a child including 1) extreme and repeated cruelty, 2) physical, psychological or sexual abuse, 3) engaging in conduct creating substantial possibility of death, permanent or temporary disfigurement, illness, impairment of bodily organs or impairment in intellectual or psychological capacity, 4) any non-accidental physical or mental injury or 5) any injury at variance with history given.
- (c) “Sexual abuse” includes solicitation or participation in sexual activity with a child by a caregiver. Sexual abuse includes sexual activity, abuse or exploitation, including rape and incest.
- (d) “Neglect” means acts of omissions by a caretaker which result in 1) a failure or refusal to prevent child maltreatment, 2) failure to take action to protect a child from maltreatment and 3) failure, refusal or irremediable inability to

provide for the essential and necessary physical (food, clothing, shelter, medical), mental, emotional or educational need of the child.

- (e) “Sexual exploitation” means allowing, permitting or encouraging participation with a child in prostitution, obscene photography, filming or obscenely depicting a child.
- (f) “Abandonment” means the failure of the parent to provide reasonable support and to maintain regular contact with the child.

## Who Must Report?

Physicians, surgeons, coroners, dentists, osteopaths, resident interns, licensed nurses, medical personnel, teachers, school officials, school counselors, social service workers, family service workers, day care center workers, child or foster care workers, mental health professionals, peace officers, law enforcement officers, prosecuting attorneys and judges are required by law to report any suspected child abuse.

## Who May Report?

Any person with reasonable cause to suspect maltreatment may immediately notify the Child Abuse Hotline. Knowing how, when and what to report about child maltreatment may make a life or death difference for a child. If you feel that a child is in an emergency situation, call local law enforcement.

## How to Report?

The Child Maltreatment Act established a Hotline to take complaints of suspected maltreatment. Reports can be made to a statewide, toll free hotline (1-800-482-5964).

The person (reporter) reporting the suspected abuse could be asked the following:

- The name, age and address of child
- The name(s) and address(es) of the parent(s)
- The name, address and telephone number of the reporter
- Reason for suspected abuse
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of other witnesses
- Reporter's relationship to the alleged victim
- Any previous suspicious injury to the child

## If I Do Report, Am I Liable?

Any person or agency in this state who reports child maltreatment in good faith is immune to civil and criminal liability. The good faith of mandated reporters is assumed under the law.

## References

*Detecting and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse.*

Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence. 1994.

*The Educator's Role.* DHEW Publication No. 79-30172.

*User Manual Series on Child Abuse.* National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. 1992.

State of Arkansas, 82nd General Assembly, Regular Session 1999, Act 1340, Representative Madison.  
[Http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us)

## What Are Some Indicators of Child Maltreatment?

Type of Child Maltreatment	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
<b>Physical Abuse</b> <p>Physical abuse is the most visible form of maltreatment. The following actions are not reasonable or moderate when used to correct or restrain a child: physical injury resulting from burning, biting, kicking, throwing, cutting, striking, shaking, interfering with child's breathing and/or threatening a child with a deadly weapon.</p>	<b>Unexplained bruises and welts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on face, lips, mouth</li> <li>on torso, back, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>in various stages of healing</li> <li>clustered, forming regular patterns</li> <li>reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle)</li> <li>on several different surface areas</li> <li>regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation</li> </ul> <b>Unexplained burns</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cigar or cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks</li> <li>immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like, doughnut-shaped on buttocks or genitalia)</li> <li>patterned like electric burner, iron, etc.</li> <li>rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso</li> </ul> <b>Unexplained fractures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to skull, nose, facial structure</li> <li>in various stages of healing</li> <li>multiple or spiral fractures</li> </ul> <b>Unexplained lacerations or abrasions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to mouth, lips, gums, eyes</li> <li>to external genitalia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wary of adult contact</li> <li>apprehensive when other children cry</li> </ul> <b>Behavioral Extremes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aggressiveness or withdrawal</li> <li>frightened of parents</li> <li>afraid to go home</li> <li>reports injury by parents</li> <li>chronic runaway</li> <li>complains of soreness</li> <li>wears inappropriate clothing</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Abuse</b> <p>Sexual abuse of a child is an act of a person which forces, coerces or threatens a child to have any form of sexual contact. Includes any offense relating to sexual activity, abuse or exploitation, including rape and incest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty in walking or sitting</li> <li>Torn, stained or bloody underclothing</li> <li>Pain or itching in genital area</li> <li>Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas</li> <li>Venereal disease, especially in preteens</li> <li>Pregnancy</li> <li>Pain when urinating</li> <li>Vaginal discharge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class</li> <li>Withdrawal, fantasy, infantile behavior</li> <li>Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge</li> <li>Poor peer relationships</li> <li>Delinquent or run away</li> <li>Reports sexual assault by caretaker</li> <li>Difficulty eating or sleeping</li> </ul>

Type of Child Maltreatment	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
<b>Neglect</b>  Child neglect is considered to be the most common form of maltreatment reported to child protective service agencies. Neglect refers to the failure to provide needed, age-appropriate care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress, poor weight gain</li> <li>• Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods</li> <li>• Unattended physical problems or medical needs</li> <li>• Abandonment</li> <li>• Frequent absences from school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begging, stealing food</li> <li>• Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure)</li> <li>• Constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep in class</li> <li>• Alcohol or drug abuse</li> <li>• Delinquency (e.g., thefts)</li> <li>• States there is no caretaker</li> <li>• Failure of parent/caregiver to protect the child from physical abuse</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>  Commonly defined as a pattern of behavior that can have a huge impact on a child's positive emotional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech disorders</li> <li>• Lags in physical development</li> <li>• Failure-to-thrive</li> <li>• Impaired sense of self-worth</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Empty facial appearance</li> <li>• Fears adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking, etc.)</li> <li>• Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive, etc.)</li> <li>• Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)</li> <li>• Psychoneurotic reactions (hysteria, obsession, compulsion, phobias, hypochondria)</li> </ul> <p><b>Behavior Extremes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compliant, passive</li> <li>• aggressive, demanding</li> </ul> <p><b>Overly Adaptive Behavior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inappropriately adult</li> <li>• inappropriately infant</li> <li>• developmental lags (mental, emotional)</li> <li>• attempted suicide</li> </ul>

**Acknowledgment** – The original version of this publication was prepared by Dr. Betty Youngman, former Extension specialist - family life, and Traci Johnston, Extension child care program associate. Appreciation is expressed to Ms. Carol Griffin, Child Abuse Projects Coordinator, Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence, for her review of this publication.

Source: DHEW Publication No. 79-30172.

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