

Signs of Child Abuse

Indicators of abuse can include, but are not limited to, the following signs. Some signs are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact the authorities. You do not need proof.

- 1. Unexplained injuries.** Abused children may have unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.
- 2. Changes in behavior.** Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
- 3. Returning to earlier behaviors.** Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some, loss of memory or language may be an issue.
- 4. Fear of going home.** Abused children may express fear or anxiety about leaving school or going places with the person who is abusing them.
- 5. Changes in eating.** Stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
- 6. Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or difficulty falling asleep and may appear tired or fatigued.
- 7. Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the children's injuries from authorities.
- 8. Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may be consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
- 9. Risk-taking behaviors.** Abused children may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
- 10. Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.



If a child discloses:

DO:

- Remain calm
- Believe the child
- Allow the child to talk
- Show interest or concern
- Reassure and support the child
- Take action. It could save a child's life

DON'T:

- Panic or overreact
- Press the child to talk
- Promise anything you can't control
- Confront the offender
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings
- Overwhelm the child with questions

Source: *One with Courage*, www.onewithcourage.org

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

Franklin County Children Services Abuse and Neglect Hotline

(614) 229-7000

<http://childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov>

National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A-Child (1-800-422-4453)

www.childhelp.org



655 E. Livingston Avenue

Columbus, OH 43205

(614) 722-8200

www.FamilySafetyandHealing.org

www.WheresTheLine.info



www.facebook.com/familysafetyandhealing



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