



## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Child abuse is any act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.

### Did you know?

- In 2018, there were 678,000 victims of child abuse and neglect nationwide.
- More than ¼ of child victims are younger than 3 years old.
- Most abuse occurs due to unreasonable expectations of children's behavior and/or actions.
- Approximately 10% of kids suffer sexual abuse before age 18.
- Not all perpetrators are adults—an estimated 20% of reported cases of child abuse are perpetrated by individuals under the age of 18.
- In 2018, there were 1,770 child fatalities from abuse and neglect.
- 51% of our child fatalities in Texas had a caregiver that was under the influence of drugs at the time of that child's death with marijuana topping the list.

### FORMS OF ABUSE

- **Physical abuse:** Any physical injury resulting in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child.
- **Sexual abuse:** Any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child.
- **Emotional abuse:** A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth.
- **Neglect:** The failure to provide for a child's basic needs to sustain health and life of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.
- **Human Trafficking:** The exploitation of child for the purpose of commercial sex or through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of forced labor.

### KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

- The three key prevention tools are assertiveness, resiliency and empathy.
  - Assertiveness can help your child communicate more efficiently and positively. Practice using assertive statements and talk about how aggressive and passive statements are not effective.
  - Resiliency will help them recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity. We cannot prevent every unpleasant situation from happening to our children but we can help them bounce back. Build resiliency in your child by:
    - practicing coping skills
    - instilling a positive sense of self
    - boosting a desire to achieve by practicing goal setting
    - encouraging them more than praising them

## KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE (CONTINUED)



- Empathy is another key prevention tool:
  - Empathy is the ability to understand how others would feel. Use emotion words with your child. When asking them about their day, ask them specific things that made them feel happy, sad, frustrated etc., then ask them what emotions they observed in others. Connecting words to emotions can help your child communicate their feelings more effectively.
- Discuss the roles of people in their lives. For example the role of their coach is to teach and lead them in a sport not to teach them about personal or private subjects.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- Familiarize yourself with developmental milestones to better understand what to reasonably expect from your child.
- Behavioral changes are more common than actual verbal disclosures of abuse such as: depression, anxiety, withdraw from family, friends, normal activities, fear of certain places or people, loss of appetite, etc.
  - Personal safety should be a continuous topic of discussion.
  - Be a good listener and practice open communication.
  - Believe your child if they tell you that someone has made them feel uncomfortable. If your child acts up or shows distress when being left with a caretaker trust your instinct and your child's.
  - Seek counseling if any abuse has occurred or attempted. Physical symptoms of abuse may heal but the emotional effects can last a lifetime.


## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Parenting can be difficult: seek social connections and support from other parents.
- Practice positive discipline techniques and understand the difference between discipline vs. punishment:
  - Discipline attacks the behavior and is used to teach and guide
  - Punishment attacks the child and is used to shame and scare
- Cool down before disciplining your child.
- It is normal to feel frustrated from time to time but it is never ok to harm your child.
- Practice stress management.
- If you find yourself becoming agitated, call family, a friend, or a neighbor for help.
- Be mindful when expressing displeasure towards the undesired behavior that you do not express displeasure in your child as well, for example breaking a window is "bad" but does not make your child "bad". They may have made a bad choice, discuss what they could have done differently.
- Set a good example, our children are the best imitators.
- Show your child that conflicts can be settled without hitting and/or yelling.
- Babies cry because it is their only form of communication: tend to their cries in a timely manner

## REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- ALWAYS CALL 911 IF CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER.

### How to Report a Tip

 Call 713.222.TIPS (8477)

 Use our **Mobile App**  
Download app name: Crime Stoppers Houston

 Go to [crime-stoppers.org](https://www.crime-stoppers.org)

Texas law requires that any person  
suspecting that a child has been abused or  
neglected must immediately make a report to  
**1-800-252-5400.**