

CHILD ABUSE

SAFETY AWARENESS TIPS



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 2019, there were **656,000 victims of child abuse and neglect** nationwide, **64,093 victims were in Texas**.*
- Approximately **10% of kids suffer sexual abuse** before age 18.*
- In 2019, there were **1,840 child fatalities** from abuse and neglect, **79.7%** of those fatalities were **done by a parent** of the child and **51%** had a caregiver that was **under the influence of drugs** at the time of that child's death with marijuana topping the list.*

* Children's Bureau (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (acf.hhs.gov).

PREVENTION



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

- Instill assertiveness, resiliency, and empathy:
 - **Assertiveness** can help your child communicate effectively. Practice using assertive statements such as “no”.
 - **Resiliency** will help them recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity. Practice coping skills, reinforce a positive self-image, and encourage goal setting.
 - **Empathy** is the ability to understand how others would feel. Connecting emotions to words can help your child communicate their feelings more effectively. 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.
- Help your child identify a trusted adult in their home, school, and community that they can confide in in case of an emergency.
- Discuss the roles of adults such as teachers, coaches, etc. and clearly define physical/emotional boundaries.
- Behavioral changes are more common than actual verbal disclosures of abuse. Indicators of stress or trauma include depression, anxiety, withdraw from family, friends, normal activities, fear of certain places or people, loss of appetite, etc.
- 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 instincts 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 and practice stress management.
- Cool down before disciplining your child. If you find yourself becoming agitated, call family, a friend, or a neighbor for help.
- Show your child that conflicts can be settled without hitting and/or yelling. Children are the best imitators.
- 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**.



RECOGNIZE THE 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.
- **Medical Neglect:** A type of maltreatment caused by failure of the caregiver to provide for the appropriate health care of the child although financially able to do so, or offered financial or other resources to do so.
- **Human Trafficking:** The exploitation of child for the purpose of commercial sex or through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of forced labor.



WHERE TO REPORT

- If you are in immediate danger, **Call 911!**
- Texas law requires that any person suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected must immediately make a report to DFPS at **1-800-252-5400**



PARTNERS & RESOURCES

- **Child Advocates** – Child Advocates mobilizes court appointed volunteers to advocate for abused/neglected children in court so they can find safe, permanent homes. www.childadvocates.org
- **Children @ Risk** – Uses research and data to understand the needs of Texas children and their families. childrenatrisk.org
- **Children's Assessment Center** – provides a safe haven to sexually abused children and their families. www.cachouston.org
- **Houston-Area Internet Crimes Against Children** – Taskforce engaged in proactive and reactive investigations and prosecutions of persons involved in child abuse and exploitation involving the Internet. www.icactaskforce.org
- **National Center of Missing and Exploited Children** – comprehensive reporting center for all issues related to the prevention of and recovery from child victimization. www.missingkids.org/HOME



LOCAL OFFICIALS



Officer

Detains individual and contacts DA to see if they will accept charges. If charges are accepted, arrest is made and officer books individual.



DA

Analyze and gather evidence to determine whether there are grounds for prosecution. Gives approval for arrest.



Magistrate

Appointed by the judge. Given authority to sometimes determine if individual will be released on bond or detained in Jail.



Judge

Appoints magistrates and oversees outcomes of court proceedings.