



April Is Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month

Child Abuse is Family Violence

Child abuse is defined as any act to harm or to threaten harm to a child's health or welfare which can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation.

The lines between spousal abuse and child abuse are blurred. Studies show that child abuse occurs in 30 to 60 percent of family violence cases among families with children. A 1989 survey of

6,000 families found that 50 percent of men who assault their wives also abuse their children. Another frightening statistic, the Children's Defense Fund estimates that 30 percent of abused children will abuse

their own children, perpetuating the cycle of violence into the next generation.

Child abuse, like any type of family violence, does not discriminate. It is most likely to happen when parents lack parenting knowledge and skills, are cut off from friends and family, have unmet emotional needs, abuse drugs or alcohol, were abused themselves or are going through a crisis.

Abused children tend to lack development in social, cognitive, physical and emotional skills. Many become dependent on drugs, get into legal trouble or become runaways. Girls tend to get into serious relationships at very early ages to escape their family life and often find themselves in abusive relationships all over again.

There are characteristics that are common to many abused children. If you notice one or more of these symptoms in a child, it is possible that the child has been abused in some way. They include mood swings, withdrawal or depression, bed wetting, eating problems, fear of adults, sleeping problems or nightmares, self-destructive behavior, frequent school absences or tardiness, bullying or aggressive behavior, and strange bruises, burns or bites.

If you suspect someone is being abused, call your local Dept. of Social Services office or Police Department. Help keep our children safe!

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