



Kids Count On **Adults Like Us** to Keep Them Safe from Abuse

RECOGNIZING & REPORTING ABUSE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ADULTS

All adults includes: family members, friends, teachers, school staff, coaches, neighbors, faith communities, community organizations, and all others who care about child safety.

The vast majority of abuse happens in the home. Kids are at the greatest risk at home. 81% of perpetrators are a parent or a parent's partner. 87% of cases happen within the family.

In times of crisis and instability, child abuse and neglect rates increase. Since we began social distancing in March of 2020 to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the U.S. saw a dramatic decline in reports of child abuse and neglect. That doesn't mean child abuse declined. It means that abuse was not being reported due to kids' isolation. Teachers and school staff make the largest proportion of child abuse reports—about one-in-five reports comes from a professional at school. As children start to return to school and to other public places and activities, it is critical that adults in the community pay attention for signs of potential neglect or abuse.

Even prior to the pandemic, child sexual abuse was reaching crisis levels. Latest national data showed a marked increase in child sexual abuse cases for the first time in over 15 years, up 6% from the previous year. Since March 2020, the majority of National Sexual Assault Hotline calls have been from minors. Child enticement tip reports to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children increased 93% in the first half of 2020 as compared to the same time period in 2019.

Signs a Child May Not Be Safe

Child may be experiencing physical abuse if he/she:

- ✓ Appears frightened of a caregiver
- ✓ Has burns, bites, broken bones, bruising, complaints of pain
- ✓ Has an unexplained or poorly explained injury, or caregiver blames child's behavior or personality for the injury

Child may be experiencing sexual abuse if he/she:

- ✓ Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults
- ✓ Exhibits age-inappropriate sexual knowledge/behavior
- ✓ Has difficulty walking or sitting
- ✓ Is touched or spoken to sexually, or is shown pornography

Child may be experiencing emotional abuse if he/she:

- ✓ Exhibits extreme behaviors (overly aggressive/compliant)
- ✓ Appears emotionally unattached to caregiver and others
- ✓ Is blamed, belittled, berated, or refused help by caregiver

Child may be experiencing neglect if he/she:

- ✓ Begs/steals food, has severe poor hygiene, indicates that no one at home provides care
- ✓ Uses alcohol or other drugs
- ✓ Experiences highly stressful home situations (alcohol/drug abuse, unlocked guns/weapons, etc.)

Listen and React Appropriately

If a child tells you that he or she has been abused:

Stay calm, listen with compassion; tell them "I believe you." Ask only open-ended questions like "Tell me more;" don't interrogate. Reassure them that they've done nothing wrong and you will help.

Trust your gut.

If something does not look, sound, or feel safe, report it.

Kids are counting on adults in their lives to protect them—you may be the only person to act.

If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe, report. Do not assume that someone else has already made the call.

Making a report means requesting help and services.

When you report, you are asking a professional to help a child and their family. **You are not making an accusation. You do not need proof.**

Anonymous reports are accepted from anyone.

Anyone making a report in good faith is protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action. Your identity is held confidential and will not be revealed.

Where Should I Report?

Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (24 hrs/7 days per week):
1-800-4-A-CHILD or **1-844-422-4453**

Find a Child Advocacy Center in your area >

If a child is in immediate danger, call 911

Thanks to **missourikidsfirst.org** for the inspiration and source material for this resource.

Share this Knowledge, Learn More

Spread the word with your community and on social media.

Find additional resources at PartnersInPrevention.org >

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