

# **Kehillat Israel Early Childhood Center** **Child Abuse Prevention Guide**

Violence and abuse in our homes and communities are serious problems. No one, not even a family member, has the right to be violent or abusive. It's against the law. Don't keep it a secret. Talk to someone you trust and get help. Get help, too, if you are the one who is violent or abusive. Change is possible, but you can't do it alone. Act now before you hurt someone or ruin someone else's life and your own.

## **Violence and Abuse at Home**

If you are a victim, don't blame yourself. It's not your fault. But you do need to protect yourself and your family from further harm. Try to set aside clothes and money for you and your children. You may need to leave in a hurry. To find a safe place to stay with your children and to get legal help, call, Child Abuse and Family Violence or National Domestic Violence Hotline.

## **Where to Find Help:**

### **Free Statewide Phone Numbers:**

Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-540-4000
National Crime Prevention Council	1-800-937-7383
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233
National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800-656-4673
Victim Resource Line	1-800-842-8467
LAPD Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-978-3600
West LA Info Line	1-310-551-2929
Police, Fire or Ambulance	9-1-1

### **Websites:**

[www.childabuse.com](http://www.childabuse.com)

[www.preventchildabuse.com](http://www.preventchildabuse.com)

## **What is child abuse?**

Child abuse is any mistreatment or neglect of a child that results in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot be reasonably explained. Child abuse can include: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

## **What makes people abuse children?**

It is difficult to imagine that any person would intentionally inflict harm on a child. Many times, physical abuse is a result of excessive discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate for the child's age. The parent may simply be unaware of the magnitude of force with which he or she strikes a child. Most parents want to be good parents but sometimes lose control and are unable to cope.

Factors which contribute to child abuse include the immaturity of parents, lack of parenting skills, unrealistic expectations about children's behavior and capabilities, a parent's own negative childhood experience, social isolation, frequent family crises and drug or alcohol problems. Child abuse is a symptom that parents are having difficulty coping with their situation.

## **What is physical abuse?**

Physical abuse, which is 19% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is the most visible form of abuse and may be defined as any act which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents unreasonable, severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable

punishment. This usually happens when a frustrated or angry parent strikes, shakes or throws a child. Physical abuse injuries result from punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child.

### **What is emotional abuse?**

Emotional abuse, which is 8% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is commonly defined as the systematic tearing down of another human being. It is considered a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with a child's positive development. Emotional abuse is probably the least understood of all child abuse, yet it is the most prevalent, and can be the cruelest and most destructive of all types of abuse.

Because emotional abuse attacks the child's psyche and self-concept, the victim comes to see him or herself as unworthy of love and affection. Children who are constantly shamed, humiliated, terrorized or rejected suffer at least as much, if not more, than if they had been physically assaulted.

An infant who is being severely deprived of basic emotional nurturing, even though physically well cared for, can fail to thrive and can eventually die. Less severe forms of early emotional deprivation may produce babies who grow into anxious and insecure children who are slow to develop or who might have low self-esteem.

### **Types of Emotional Abuse:**

1. Rejecting -- Parents who lack the ability to bond will often display rejecting behavior toward a child. They tell a child in a variety of ways that he or she is unwanted. They may also tell the child to leave, call him or her names and tell the child he or she is worthless. They may not talk to or hold the young child as he or she grows. The child may become the family scapegoat, being blamed for all the family's problems.
2. Ignoring -- Adults who have had few of their emotional needs met are often unable to respond to the needs of their children. They may not show attachment to the child or provide nurturance. They may show no interest in the child, express affection or even recognize the child's presence. Many times the parent is physically there but emotionally unavailable.
3. Terrorizing -- Parents may single out one child to criticize and punish. They may ridicule him or her for displaying normal emotions and have expectations far beyond his or her normal abilities. The child may be threatened with death, mutilation or abandonment.
4. Isolating -- A parent who abuses a child through isolation may not allow the child to engage in appropriate activities with his or her peers; may keep a baby in his or her room, not exposed to stimulation; or may prevent teenagers from participating in extracurricular activities. Parents may require the child to stay in his or her room from the time school lets out until the next morning, or restrict eating to isolation or seclusion.
5. Corrupting -- Parents permit children to use drugs or alcohol; to watch cruel behavior toward animals; to watch pornographic materials and adult sex acts; or to witness or participate in criminal activities such as stealing, assault, prostitution, gambling, etc.

### **What are the effects of emotional abuse?**

Other types of abuse are usually identifiable because marks or other physical evidence is left, however, emotional abuse can be very hard to diagnose or even to define. In some instances, an emotionally abused child will show no signs of abuse. For this reason, emotional abuse is the most difficult form of child maltreatment to identify and stop. This type of abuse leaves hidden scars that manifest themselves in numerous ways. Insecurity, poor self-esteem, destructive behavior, angry acts (such as fire setting or cruelty to animals), withdrawal, poor development of basic skills, alcohol or drug abuse, suicide and difficulty forming relationships can all be possible results of emotional abuse.

### **What is sexual abuse?**

It is very difficult for most people to talk about sexual abuse and even more difficult for society as a whole to acknowledge that the sexual abuse of children of all ages -- including infants -- happens everyday in the United States. It is no an easy phenomenon to define, primarily because permissible childhood

behavior varies in accordance with cultural, family and social tolerances. Sexual abuse, which is 10% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is defined as the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend and therefore to which they are unable to give informed consent and/or which violates the taboos of society.

Sexual abuse is any misuse of a child for sexual pleasure or gratification. It has the potential to interfere with a child's normal, healthy development, both emotionally and physically. Often, sexually victimized children experience severe emotional disturbances from their own feelings of guilt and shame, as well as the feelings which society imposes on them.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, sexual abuse includes sexual intercourse and/or its deviations. These behaviors may be the final acts in a worsening pattern of sexual abuse. For this reason and because of their devastating effects, exhibitionism, fondling and any other sexual contact with children are also considered sexually abusive.

Non-touching sexual abuse offenses include:

- Indecent exposure/exhibitionism
- Exposing children to pornographic material
- Deliberately exposing a child to the act of sexual intercourse
- Masturbation in front of a child

Touching sexual offenses include:

- Fondling
- Making a child touch an adult's sexual organs
- Any penetration of a child's vagina or anus by an object without a medical purpose

Sexual exploitation offenses include:

- Engaging a child for the purposes of prostitution
- Using a child to film, photograph or model pornography

### **What is child neglect?**

Child neglect, which is 63% of all substantiated cases of child abuse, is the most common form of child maltreatment reported to child protective services. It is defined as a "type of maltreatment that refers to the failure to provide needed age-appropriate care," such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for development of physical, intellectual and emotional capacities. Unlike physical and sexual abuse, neglect is usually typified by an ongoing pattern of inadequate care and is readily observed by individuals in close contact with the child. Physicians, nurses, day care personnel, relatives and neighbors are frequently the ones to suspect and report neglected infants, toddlers and preschool children.

### **The types of neglect:**

1. Physical neglect -- accounts for the majority of cases of maltreatment. The definition includes the refusal of or extreme delay in seeking necessary health care, child abandonment, inadequate supervision, rejection of a child leading to expulsion from the home, and failing to adequately provide for the child's safety and physical and emotional needs. Physical neglect can severely impact a child's development by causing failure to thrive, malnutrition; serious illnesses; physical harm in the form of cuts, bruises and burns due to lack of supervision and a lifetime of low self-esteem.
2. Educational neglect -- occurs when a child is allowed to engage in chronic truancy, is of mandatory school age but not enrolled in school or receiving needed special educational training. Educational neglect can lead to underachievement in acquiring necessary basic skills, dropping out of school and/or continually disruptive behavior.
3. Emotional neglect -- includes such actions as chronic or extreme spousal abuse in the child's presence, allowing a child to use drugs or alcohol, refusal or failure to provide needed psychological care, constant belittling and withholding of affection. This pattern of behavior can lead to poor self-image, alcohol or drug abuse, destructive behavior and even suicide. Severe

neglect of infants can result in the infant failing to grow and thrive and may even lead to infant death.

4. Medical neglect -- is the failure to provide appropriate health care for a child although financially able to do so. In some cases, a parent or caretaker will withhold traditional medical care during the practice of religious beliefs. These cases generally do not fall under the definition of medical neglect; however, some states will obtain a court order forcing medical treatment of a child in order to save a child's life or prevent life-threatening injury resulting from the lack of treatment. Medical neglect can result in poor overall health and compounded medical problems.

### **What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?**

When a baby is vigorously shaken, the head moves back and forth. This sudden whiplash motion can cause bleeding inside the head and increased pressure on the brain, causing the brain to pull apart and resulting in injury to the baby. This is known as Shaken Baby Syndrome, and is one of the leading forms of fatal child abuse. A baby's head and neck are susceptible to head trauma because his or her muscles are not fully developed and the brain tissue is exceptionally fragile. Head trauma is the leading cause of disability among abused infants and children.

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs most frequently in infants younger than six months old, yet can occur up to the age of three. Often there are no obvious outward signs if inside injury, particularly in the head or behind the eyes. In reality, shaking a baby, if only for a few seconds, can injure the baby for life. These injuries can include brain swelling and damage; cerebral palsy; mental retardation; developmental delays; blindness; hearing loss; paralysis and death. When a child is shaken in anger and frustration, the force is multiplied five or 10 times than it would be if the child had simply tripped and fallen.

### **How does it happen?**

Often frustrated parents or other persons responsible for a child's care feel that shaking a baby is a harmless way to make a child stop crying. The number one reason a baby is shaken is because of inconsolable crying. Almost 25 percent of all babies with Shaken Baby Syndrome die. It is estimated that 25-50 percent of parents and caretakers aren't aware of the effects of shaking a baby.

### **What can you do to prevent a tragedy?**

If you or someone else shakes a baby, either accidentally or on purpose, call 911 or take the child to the emergency room immediately. Bleeding in side the brain can be treated. Immediate medical attention will save your baby many future problems . . . and possible the baby's life.

