



part 1 of 2—

Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse

by Erica Abell Huinda

Abuse—where doesn't it exist? Whether it's the child who bears welts on her legs because she couldn't make it to the bathroom on time or the child who is routinely yelled at and blamed because her mom has bad days at work, abuse wears many faces. In addition, the forms of abuse can be blatant, subtle, or anywhere in between. How much do you know about child abuse and reporting requirements?

1 The most common type of child abuse is
A. Sexual abuse
B. Physical abuse
C. Emotional abuse
D. Neglect

2 The age group most often victimized is
A. 7 years and younger
B. 8 to 12 years old
C. 13 to 18 years old

3 A child's age makes a difference in the type of abuse experienced.
True
False

4 I should report child abuse even if it is only a suspicion.
True
False

5 I could be held legally responsible if I fail to report suspected abuse.
True
False



6 If a child tells me she is being abused but asks me to keep it a secret, then I am obligated to comply with her request.
True
False

7 Which of the following is a sign of potential child abuse?
A. Below age-level height and weight
B. Untreated illness or injury
C. Poor peer relationships
D. All of the above

8 Reporting incidences of child abuse to my pastor or church board would be a violation of privacy.
True
False

9 The majority of parents who abuse children are mentally ill.
True
False

10 Neglect is not as serious as physical abuse.
True
False

Answers:

1. D—Neglect. Neglect is the most common form of child abuse. Child Protective Services (CPS) determined that 52 percent of victims in 1996 suffered neglect, 24 percent physical abuse, 12 percent sexual abuse, 6 percent emotional abuse, and 3 percent medical neglect. Many children are the victims of more than one kind of abuse.

2. A—7 years and younger. Although child abuse and neglect affect children of all ages, CPS confirmed that more than half were 7 years old or younger (1996). Approximately 26 percent were ages 8 to 12 while another 21 percent were 13 to 18.

3. True. Children younger than 8 tend to suffer more from

neglect and medical neglect while children over 8 are more often the victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Please note, however, that all ages experience all forms of abuse.

4. True. A report should be made when reasonable cause exists that a child has been abused. You do not need to prove the abuse. CPS workers will investigate the reported abuse.

5. True. All states have mandatory reporting laws. Check with your local Child Protective Services to learn more about the statutes governing your state.

6. False. You are required by law to follow your state's reporting procedures. Reassure the child that she has done the right

thing, but do not promise not to tell.

7. D—All of the above. There are many different signs of child abuse. You should be alert to the many different types of verbal, physical, and behavioral indicators.

8. False. If you suspect or are aware of child abuse, immediately report it to your pastor or church board to coordinate your efforts in reporting abuse.

9. False. Fewer than 10 percent of abusive parents have a mental disorder.

10. False. Neglect is just as serious as any other type of abuse. Cognitive and neurological deficits occur when children experience neglect.

Questions for Further Study—

1. Within your children's ministry, have you had an incident where abuse was suspected? How was it handled?

2. Does your church have written standard procedures regarding handling reported abuse?

part 2 of 2—

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How do I report suspected abuse?

Most states have a toll free number to call. To find your state's number call the Child-help's National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4 A CHILD (800-422-4453).

TDD: 1-800-2 A CHILD.

Although there are many different signs of abuse, here is a brief list of indicators to watch for:

Emotional Abuse

- Habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging, and thumb sucking in an older child
- Poor peer relationships
- Behavioral extremes or self-destructive behavior
- Irrational and persistent fears, dreads, or hatreds
- Neglect
- Height and weight significantly below age-level average
- Abandonment or inadequate supervision of child
- Untreated illness or injury
- Lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter

- Lack of necessary medical and dental care

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises and welts, fractures or dislocations, burns, lacerations, human bite marks, pinch



marks, lacerations, or bald patches

- Is afraid to go home
- Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries

- Suggests that other children should be punished harshly
- Feels deserving of punishment

Sexual Abuse

- Has sexual knowledge or behavior beyond child's developmental level
- Is depressed or suicidal
- Has frequent psychosomatic complaints
- Suddenly avoids certain familiar adults or places
- Abuses drugs or alcohol
- School grades drop

Sources:

To learn more about child abuse refer to "What are the Basic Guidelines for Protecting Children?" in the *Missionettes Leader Training Guide* and visit the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information Website at <http://www.calib.com/nccanch/>

