

Child abuse and neglect...what is it?

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. Coercion (physical, psychological or emotional) is intrinsic to sexual abuse. This is what distinguishes it from sexual exploration with peers. It is against the law to

- touch a child for a sexual purpose
- encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way
- encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity
- tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult's or older child's sexual purposes

Sexual abuse of children can take many forms. This includes sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching a child undress for sexual pleasure, allowing a child to look at, or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution.

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolating the child. It also includes failure by a parent or caregiver to provide their children with love, emotional support, and guidance.

What is neglect?

Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. This can occur when parents do not know about appropriate care for children, when they cannot adequately supervise their children or when they are unable to plan ahead.

Young children should never be left unattended. This includes leaving a child alone in a car even if you lock the doors and are gone for only a few minutes.

If a child tells you about abuse

- stay calm
- listen to the child
- let the child know that you believe him or her
- reassure the child
- tell the child you are sorry it happened
- let the child know it is not his or her fault
- do not promise to keep it a secret
- do not say everything will be fine now—it may take a long time before it is

Contact the CAS

Revised 05/2006



Children's Aid Society
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