

**PREVENTING
AND
RESPONDING
TO
CHILD ABUSE**

**A
COMMUNITY
GUIDE**

Compiled by:



The Child Abuse
Prevention Coalition
of the Lehigh Valley

June, 2013

Dear Citizen:

Childhood is often characterized as the epitome of innocence. And yet, each year in Pennsylvania, thousands of children are seriously neglected, emotionally abused, sexually molested, and physically injured – sometimes fatally – by the very people who should be ensuring their innocence and well-being.

There are few matters that are as profoundly disturbing, complex, and controversial as child abuse. Confronting it evokes an array of unsettling emotions in all of us; I, as well, experienced this while handling over 10,000 cases of suspected child abuse during my 32 years as a child welfare investigator. Although many people feel uncomfortable dealing with this perplexing problem, it is an undeniable reality that the overwhelming majority of child abuse perpetrators do not seek assistance or treatment. Therefore, someone else has to initiate intervention by making a referral to prompt an appropriate investigation. Relatives, neighbors, friends, and alert community members are generally among the “first in line” to discover the abuse.

Project Child has composed this primer to teach you how to recognize the indicators of suspected child abuse and to direct you in taking the necessary course of action. Please review this material carefully. It could help you have a tremendously positive effect on the life of an abused child.

*David E. Lehr
Project Child Steering Committee Member*

WHY SHOULD I BECOME FAMILIAR WITH CHILD ABUSE?

IT COULD HAPPEN ANYWHERE AND TO ANYONE

Abusers come in all ages, genders and professions. They are from various racial, ethnic and socio-economic classes. Parents and other significant caretakers abuse children. Often sexual abusers target vulnerabilities and misuse trust to manipulate victims.

CHILD ABUSE HAS LONG LASTING EFFECTS

It is well documented that children who have been abused or neglected are more likely to experience adverse outcomes throughout their life span in a number of areas:

- Poor Physical health (e.g., chronic fatigue, altered immune function, hypertension, sexually transmitted diseases, obesity);
- Poor emotional and mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and attempt, post-traumatic stress disorder);
- Social difficulties (e.g., insecure attachments with caregivers, which may lead to difficulties in developing trusting relationships with peers and adults later in life);
- Cognitive dysfunction (e.g., deficits in attention, abstract reasoning, language development, and problem-solving skills, which ultimately affect academic achievement and school performance);

- High-risk health behaviors (e.g., a higher number of lifetime sexual partners, younger age at first voluntary intercourse, teen pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse); and

- Behavioral problems (e.g., aggression, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, abusive or violent behavior) (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006; Goldman, Salus, Wolcott & Kennedy, 2003; Hagele, 2005).

- Abused children are 25 times more likely to repeat a grade, and approximately 75% of high school dropouts have a history of abuse in their family.

- Every 10 seconds in America a child is abused. When the abuse persists uninterrupted, the longitudinal impact can be incredibly significant. 45% of abused children become adult alcoholics and 85% of long term prisoners were abused children.

YOU CAN HELP

The Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires persons who, in the course of their employment, come in contact with children, to report **suspected** child abuse. These people are called “**mandated reporters**” for **suspected** child abuse. All other persons are in a category called “**permissive reporters.**” Though you are not required to report child abuse and neglect, often your call to ChildLine will result in getting troubled families the help they need.

The law states that anyone reporting in “good faith” is immune from civil and criminal liability. The reporter’s name is held in confidence. It is not up to the reporter to prove anything. That is the job of the Children and Youth Agency and police.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE ACCORDING TO PENNSYLVANIA LAW?

Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) establishes that county children and youth agencies shall investigate cases of suspected child abuse perpetrated upon a child less than 18 years of age by either:

- the child's parent (biological, adoptive, or legal guardian)
- a paramour of the child's parent
- an individual, age 14 or older, residing in the same home as the child (step-parent, sibling, etc.) **OR**
- a person responsible for the welfare of the child (child care provider, babysitter, person who provides mental health diagnosis or treatment, etc.)

The CPSL defines as follows, five (5) types of abuse, all of which must result from an act or failure to act by a perpetrator:

1. **NONACCIDENTAL SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY:** A recent injury within two (2) years of the date of the report that causes the child severe pain or significantly impairs the child's physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently.
Legislation is pending that may change this definition to "substantial pain"
2. **SERIOUS PHYSICAL NEGLECT:** Prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide the essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which results in the child sustaining a **condition** that endangers the child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.
3. **SEXUAL ABUSE or EXPLOITATION:** Any of the following
(A) The Employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another person to engage in sexually explicit conduct.

(B) A simulation of sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting for filming of sexually explicit contact.

(C) Crimes Code Offenses—rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indent assault, indecent assault, indecent exposure, incest, or prostitution.

(D) Exploitation including any of the following:

(1) looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in either person

(2) Engaging or encouraging a child to look at the sexual or other intimate parts of another person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any person involved

(3) Engaging or encouraging a child to participate in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, computer or by a computer-aided device

4. **SERIOUS MENTAL INJURY:** A psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, that renders the child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that his or her life or safety is threatened, or seriously interferes with the child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.
5. **IMMINENT RISK:** A recent* act or failure to act that creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury or sexual abuse/exploitation of the child that occurs during an incident or series of incidents.

*within two (2) years of the date of report

If a reporter determines that the alleged abuse occurred when the victim was less than age 18, but the victim is presently between the ages of 18 and 20, a report should still be made to ChildLine or the county children & youth agency.

In situations of alleged abuse where the alleged perpetrator is **not** related to the victim in a manner described above, the county children and youth agency does **not** have investigational authority over the case. In these instances, the reporter should still make a referral to ChildLine. An example of such a situation would be where the child was allegedly molested by a neighbor who was **not** babysitting the child at the time of the alleged incident.

WHAT CAN THE AVERAGE CITIZEN DO TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse affects all of us and all of us must be part of the solution.

As an average citizen, you can...

- Be a **nurturing** parent, letting your own children know they are special and loved
- Offer a **helping hand** to a friend, neighbor or relative who is a parent
- Spend time **playing** with and **reading** to your own children
- **Report** suspected child abuse and neglect to PA ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 in the best interest of helping a child
- **Report** abuse **AGAIN** if you suspect the abuse is continuing. Your additional reports may make a difference
- Get **involved** in advocating for children and families
- **Listen, believe** and help a child who speaks with you about abuse
- Know that child **abuse is NEVER the child's fault**

As a member of the business community, you can...

- Offer **flexible work schedules** that help families balance the demands of work and parental commitments
- **Subsidize** child care expenses or offer on-site services
- Be sure **parental leave policies** facilitate positive infant/parental attachment

- **Give employees time off to volunteer** at a local non-profit that supports children/families or works to prevent child abuse
- Print **parenting tips** in company newsletters and computer networks
- Sponsor a “**brown bag**” **series** on various parenting issues

As a retail store manager, you can...

- Provide **parenting information** to customers on receipts and grocery bags
- **Post tips** for handling stressful situations in dressing rooms and bathrooms
- Provide **baby changing stations** for both fathers and mothers
- **Educate** sales staff on the needs of parents.
- **Ask parents** if they need assistance with their children
- When possible, **designate parking** spots for parents of young children

As a faith community, you can...

- Sponsor social activities for families with young children to **bolster support networks**
- Host a **parenting class or support group** for congregation or community members
- Designate a “**Week of the Family**”
- Raise **awareness** among religious and lay leaders about signs of child abuse and appropriate responses
- Establish **mentoring programs** that match parents or young people with a congregation member who wants to help

WHAT ARE TEN REASONS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE?

1. **Child abuse can be fatal.**

An average of four children a day are reported as fatal victims of maltreatment. The vast majority of these children are under the age of one.

2. **Child abuse stymies a child's normal growth and development.**

The emotional and physical damage children suffer from abuse and neglect is extensive. Documented consequences of abuse include chronic health problems, low self-esteem, lack of trust, and poor relationships with adults and peers.

3. **Child abuse is costly for many social institutions.**

Remediating the immediate consequences of serious physical abuse alone costs child welfare agencies, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities almost \$6.6 billion annually.

4. **Child abuse costs continue to multiply over time.**

Abused and neglected children grow up to be disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment. Lost productivity has been estimated at \$7.8 billion according to the 2010 Prevent Child Abuse America report.

5. **Child abuse victims often repeat on their own children the violent acts they experienced.**

Although some victims can overcome the scars of their abuse, child abuse victims are six times more likely to become abusive parents than non-abused children.

6. **Treatment services, while critical, are often ineffective in permanently altering parental behaviors.**

Program evaluations have found that even sophisticated clinical demonstration projects, often consisting of weekly contact for 12 to 18 months, eliminate the future likelihood for physical abuse or neglect for less than half their clients.

7. Prevention programs targeted at parents before they become abusive or neglectful reduce the likelihood for future maltreatment.

Parenting education, support groups and home visitor programs have consistently demonstrated positive outcomes. Specific gains include improved mother-infant bonding, enhanced parenting skills, and more consistent use of health care services. Recipients of these services have also demonstrated a reduced rate of child abuse when compared to corresponding groups of parents not receiving services.

8. Prevention programs targeted at children can improve a child's awareness of how best to avoid child abuse and other unsafe situations.

A recent review of 25 evaluations of these programs indicates that such efforts consistently result in increased knowledge for children about safety rules and what they should do if they are being abused. Further, the programs create an environment in which children can more easily disclose any prior or ongoing maltreatment.

9. Child abuse prevention efforts serve as a way to combat other social problems of concern to the public and to policy makers.

Research has found a strong correlation between a history of abuse and a variety of adult problem behaviors, including substance abuse, juvenile and adult crime, and poor social adjustment. The consistent expansion of prevention services may well lead to the eventual reduction of these problems.

10. Child abuse prevention creates a more compassionate society, one which places a high value on the welfare of children.

Insuring the safe and secure rearing of the next generation requires the efforts of all policy makers and all citizens. To the extent all are involved in the battle to prevent child abuse, all are made more aware of the need to nurture human potential in all that we do.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE?

DO SOMETHING!

- **Make a formal report of suspected child abuse. Remember, either as a “mandated” or “permissive” reporter, you should call, even if you are uncertain that the abuse occurred**
- If you are unsure whether or not to file a report of suspected abuse, call the Children and Youth Agency for advice

How to Report Child Abuse —

Call: PA ChildLine 1-800-932-0313

ChildLine refers reports to the local
Children and Youth Agency.

When contacting the appropriate authorities, have available the following information:

- Child’s full name, sex, age, address, telephone number, parent or guardian’s name, address and work number (if applicable)
- Nature of the alleged offense
- Specific information and/or observations regarding dates, times, locations, other individuals involved or present, which are related to the alleged incident
- Name of school child attends

The county office of Children and Youth may be contacted to further discuss the case. If you suspect a crime has been committed, contact the police.

**Lehigh County Office of Children and Youth Services
610-782-3064**

**Northampton County Children, Youth and Families
610-559-3270 or Toll Free 1-800-634-0808**

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Speech disorders
Habit disorders (sucking, rocking)
Lags in physical or emotional development
Failure to thrive
Asthma, severe allergies, ulcers
Substance abuse

Lack of emotional attachment to parent(s)
Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive, cruelty to animals)
Sleep disorders, inhibition of play
Behavioral extremes
Inappropriately adult or infantile
Mental/emotional developmental lags
Delinquent behavior
Depression, withdrawal, attempted suicide

Children in family are treated unequally
Blames or belittles child
Cold and rejecting
Withholds love
Lacks nurturing skills
Ignores children's problems

SEXUAL ABUSE

Difficulty in walking or sitting
Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
Pain, itching, bruises or bleeding in genital area
Venereal disease
Frequent urinary or yeast infection
Frequent unexplained sore throats
Pregnancy

Inability to concentrate
Frequent absences from school
Abrupt changes in behavior
Depression, excessive crying
Clinging behavior
Lack of self-esteem, low self-image
Reluctance to undress
Afraid to be alone with men
Severe drop in school performance
Seductive or promiscuous behavior
Repeated attempts to run away
Poor peer relationships
Threatened by physical contact
Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
Self-destructive

Jealous or overprotective of child
Isolation of child from friends
Frequent absences from home by would-be protective caretaker
Blurring of generational boundaries
Role reversal of parent and child
Rigid, restrictive home environment
Alcohol or drug misuse

*** No single indicator would confirm abuse or neglect, but identification of several should cause concern.**

WHAT ARE PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE?

PHYSICAL INDICATORS	BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF CHILD PHYSICAL ABUSE	BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF PARENT(S)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unexplained bruises and welts (especially that reflect the shape of the instrument used) Unexplained burns (immersion in hot liquid, or cigarette) Unexplained fractures Unexplained lacerations or abrasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wary of adult contacts Apprehensive when other children cry Behavioral extremes Afraid to go home; runaway Reports injury by parents Anxiety about normal activities Complaints of soreness Destructive to self and/or others Accident prone Clothing covers body inappropriately Intolerant of physical contact or touch Seems frightened of parent(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seems unconcerned about child Sees child as evil Alcohol-drug misuse Attempts to conceal child's injury or to protect identity of person responsible History of abuse as a child Discipline not consistent with child's age, condition or behavior Explanation of child's injury not consistent with type of injury or offers no explanation
NEGLECT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent hunger Inappropriate dress – clothing dirty or wrong for the weather Poor hygiene Tired, no energy Consistent lack of supervision Unattended medical and dental needs Abandonment Lice Distended stomach, emaciated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begging, stealing food Constant fatigue or falling asleep States there is no caretaker at home Frequent school absence or tardiness Destructive, pugnacious School dropout Early emancipation from family Alcohol or drug misuse Sexual misconduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcohol or drug misuse Disorganized, upset home life Isolated from friends, relatives or neighbors Lacks social skills Long-term chronic illness History of neglect as a child Lethargic, lacks motivation History of mental illness Delay seeking medical help

2012 Facts about Child Abuse in Pennsylvania:

- In 2012 26,664 reports of suspected child and student abuse were received, an increase of 2,286 reports from 2011.
- Sexual Abuse was involved in 54 percent of all substantiated reports, an increase of one percent since 2011.
- In 42 percent of the substantiated reports of abuse, the child's living arrangement at the time of abuse was with a single parent.
- Fifty-nine percent of all perpetrators has a parental (mother, father, step-parent or paramour of a parent) relationship to the child.
- There were 4,066 perpetrators in 3,565 substantiated reports. Of these, eight percent of those substantiated reports were of children being reabused.
- 54 percent, of the substantiated reports were for sexual abuse of children, and increase of one percent since 2011.
- Nearly 10 out of every 1,000 children living in Pennsylvania were reported as victims of abuse in 2012. 1.3 out to every 1000 children were found to be victims of child abuse.
- Thirty-three Pennsylvania children died as a result of abuse or neglect. in 2012.
- Fifteen of the child fatalities in 2012 were of children under the age of one year. Ten of the child fatalities were of children between the ages of 1-4 years.

Source: *Annual Report on Child Abuse,*
Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

WHAT ARE THE COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD ABUSE?

Detrimental Effects on the Physical, Psychological, Cognitive, and Behavioral Development of Children

The consequences range from minor to severe and include:

- Physical injuries
- Brain damage
- Chronic low self-esteem
- Problems with bonding and forming relationships
- Developmental delays
- Learning disorders
- Aggressive behavior

Possible Resulting Clinical Conditions

- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Conduct disorders
- Suicide
- Substance abuse
- Severe obesity

Negative Societal Consequences

- Increased risk of low academic achievement
- Drug use
- Teen pregnancy
- Juvenile delinquency
- Adult criminality
- Expanded need for mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Expanded need for police and court interventions
- Expanded need for correctional facilities
- Expanded need for public assistance programs
- Losses in productivity

Direct Costs

Based on data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other sources, Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that over \$33 billion annually is spent nationally on the direct costs associated with child abuse and neglect. Expenses incurred include:

- Hospitalization and medical services provided to treat injuries and chronic health problems resulting from abuse
- Child protective services and police investigations
- Foster care and other out-of-home placement services for maltreated children
- Family preservation, rehabilitation and treatment programs

Thirty percent of maltreated children suffer chronic medical problems. The cost to treat a child with asthma per incident in the hospital is \$6410.

Indirect Costs

Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that over \$103.8 billion is spent annually on the indirect costs associated with child abuse and neglect in the U.S. Indirect costs reflect the long-term consequences of child maltreatment in such areas as special education, mental health, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, welfare dependency, domestic violence, homelessness, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, and lost productivity to society.

Prevention Cost-Benefit Analysis

Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that for every \$3 spent on prevention, we save at least \$6 that would have been spent on child welfare services, special education, medical care, foster care, counseling, and housing of juvenile offenders.

One rigorously evaluated program model, the Nurse-Family Partnership, was shown to decrease child abuse and neglect by low-income, first-time mothers by up to 80 percent and to reduce children's arrest by age 15 by more than 50 percent. Studies of other income visiting programs found the incidence of babies born at low birthweight dropped by half among participants.

The state of Michigan concluded that providing either *comprehensive parent education or home visitation service* for every family expecting its first child would cost approximately \$43 million, in contrast to \$823 million for maltreatment and inadequate prenatal care.

In Colorado, an analysis of cost showed an estimated \$402 million per year in direct and indirect expenditures related to abuse and neglect. A *home visitation program for high-risk families* with children birth to 3 years was projected to cost \$32 million.

Conclusion

The total yearly cost of each abused or neglected child in the United States is \$63,871. Since conservative estimates were used by PCA America, the actual costs could be even higher. Regardless of the economic costs associated with child abuse and neglect, it is impossible to overstate the tragic consequences endured by the children themselves. The costs of their suffering are incalculable.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION RESOURCES

24-HOUR REPORTING LINES

PA ChildLine & Abuse Registry	1-800-932-0313
Lehigh County Office of Children & Youth Services ..	610-782-3064
Northampton County Children, Youth & Families	610-559-3270

24-HOUR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Emergency	911
Crisis Intervention, Lehigh County	610-782-3127
Crisis Intervention, Northampton County	610-252-9060
Police Communication Centers –	
Lehigh County	610-437-5252
City of Allentown	610-437-7751
Fogelsville State Police	610-395-1438
Northampton County	610-759-2200
City of Bethlehem	610-865-7187
Bethlehem State Police.....	610-861-2026
Easton City Police.....	610-250-6600

24 HOUR CONFIDENTIAL HELP LINES

Crime Victims Council of Lehigh Valley (violent crimes)	610-437-6611
Turning Point of Lehigh Valley (domestic/date violence)	610-437-3369
Valley Youth House (youth in crisis; runaway hotline; Project Child Parent Line)	610-691-1200

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION RESOURCES

OTHER ASSISTANCE & REFERRAL INFORMATION

Child Care Information Services, Lehigh County.....	610-868-4636
(Tot Info - child care resource & referral).....	1-800-528-7222
Child Care Information Services, Northampton County	610-419-4500
(child care resource & referral)	1-866-800-3880

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

<http://www.projectchildlv.org>

Project CHILD

<http://www.preventchildabuse.org>

Prevent Child Abuse America

<http://www.missingkids.org>

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

<http://www.calib.com/nccanch>

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect

<http://child-abuse.com>

Child Abuse Prevention Network

MISCELLANEOUS

Boy Scouts of America: (610-264-8551)

“It Happened to Me” – VIDEO

WHAT IS PROJECT CHILD?

Founded in 1991, Project Child is a coalition of volunteers who bring expertise from the fields of education, health care, social services, child care, business, divinity, counseling, law and law enforcement. Concerned citizens belong to the coalition as well. The mission of Project Child is to prevent child abuse and neglect in the Lehigh Valley by:

- Making the public aware of the dimensions of child abuse as a community problem, as well as strategies for its prevention, through a program of public education
- Assisting parents who are at risk of abusing their children to obtain appropriate services
- Promoting positive parenting, caretaking, and alternatives to physical discipline through parent education classes
- Providing parent support groups
- Providing empathy-building programs in elementary schools
- Providing educational forums and an annual conference for professionals & community members

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Additional FREE copies are available by calling

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**Project Child Is a
Program of Valley
Youth House**