

Indicators of child abuse

It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused.

Some indicators of child abuse are:

- Bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- Multiple bruising or injuries - for example, burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations or fractures
- Injury left untreated
- Differing versions of how an injury occurred
- Child/relative advising of abuse (disclosure)
- A child, referring to someone else being abused, may mean him/herself
- Sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- Nightmares/bedwetting/going to bed fully-clothed
- A high level of distrust of other people
- An inability to relate well with adults and/or children
- Extreme attention-seeking behaviour, disruptive or aggressive behaviour and bullying
- Seeking indiscriminate or inappropriate adult affection

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. People working with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense.

If you feel any doubt speak with the organisation's child protection officer or contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

See also **Reporting Child Abuse**

Types of child abuse

The four main types of child abuse are:

Sexual
abuse/sexual
misconduct

Any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person.

For example, suggestive behaviour, inappropriate touching or voyeuristically watching an athlete shower or change clothes.

Physical abuse

Non-accidental injury and/or harm to a child or young person, caused by another person such as a parent, caregiver or even an older child.

For example, physically punishing a young person for losing a game by hitting, throwing equipment, pushing or shoving.

Emotional abuse

Behaviours that may psychologically harm a child or young person.

For example, threatening language, bullying, ridicule, personal abuse and comments designed to demean and humiliate.

Neglect

Failing to provide a child or young person with basic physical and emotional necessities, harming them or putting them at risk of harm.

For example, keeping the best young player on field to win the game despite having an injury or making children play in excessive heat.