



Speaking for Children

**What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!
April Is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month**

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse can happen anywhere, anytime

Child Abuse and Neglect happen when a child is mistreated resulting in injury or the possibility of harm that is not accidental. Most parents do not intend to hurt their children, but abuse is defined by what happens to the child, not by what the parent meant to do or not do. Neglect can include failure to provide a nurturing environment or adequate affection to a child. It also includes failing to enroll and support a child in school or preventing a child from attending school regularly.

Physical Abuse is the non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It includes a parent's or caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person. Physical abuse can cause great bodily harm or even death.

Physical Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs and well-being to the extent that there is harm or possible harm to the child's health or safety. Neglect may include abandonment, a lack of supervision, a lack of physical hygiene, poor nutrition, a lack of basic clothing, a lack of shelter or a lack of medical care that results in threatening conditions. Physical neglect can result in illnesses that affect the long-term health and development of a child or can cause great bodily harm or even death.

Sexual Abuse is an act performed on a child or in the presence of a child for sexual gratification. Child sexual abuse includes the willful failure of a parent or caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person. Child sexual abuse can have life-long effects on a child's mental, emotional and physical health.



Psychological/Emotional Abuse includes criticizing, humiliating, insulting, belittling, name-calling, shaming, ignoring, or having constant family conflicts. Emotional abuse can have life-long effects on a child's self-esteem and on his or her mental, emotional and physical health.

What to Do to Prevent Child Abuse

Everyone can help prevent child abuse!

Help a parent in need

- If you know a family is under stress, offer to help. Even little things make a difference like giving a parent a ride to the store, running an errand, or watching the kids for an hour.

Practice good parenting skills

- Listen to and hug your children frequently. Acknowledge your kids when they behave well, not just when they do things you may dislike. Be encouraging.
- Learn the difference between punishment and discipline: punishment hurts and discipline teaches. Use discipline that is fair and consistent. Teach children the reasons behind the rules.
- Avoid shaking, tossing, or hitting children for any reason. Don't lash out at your child in anger.

- Stop to think, take a “parental time out” or take a deep breath when you need to. Pretend you’re hearing what your child is about to hear.

Get the support you need

- You are not alone. If you think you need help, turn to family, church, or community resources, especially if you feel out of control around your children.

Report suspected abuse or neglect

- Report any suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services at (707) 565-4304 or to your local law enforcement agency.

Support community prevention efforts

- Become a member, donate funds or services, support a fund-raising event, or volunteer for organizations that work to support parents and families.

Source: California Parenting Institute, 3650 Standish Ave. SR

MYTH #2: Only bad people abuse their children.

Fact: While it's easy to say that only "bad people" abuse their children, it's not always so black and white. Not all abusers are intentionally harming their children. Many have been victims of abuse themselves and don't know any other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.



MYTH #3: Child abuse doesn't happen in “good” families.

Fact: Child abuse doesn't only happen in poor families or bad neighborhoods. It crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. Sometimes, families who seem to have it all from the outside are hiding a different story behind closed doors.

MYTH #4: Most child abusers are strangers.

Fact: While abuse by strangers does happen, most abusers are family members or others close to the family.

MYTH #5: Abused children always grow up to be abusers.

Fact: It is true that abused children are more likely to repeat the cycle as adults, unconsciously repeating what they experienced as children. On the other hand, many adult survivors of child abuse have a strong motivation to protect their children from what they went through and become excellent parents.

Source: http://helpguide.org/mental/child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm

**Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect
in Sonoma County to
Child Protective Services
(707) 565-4304**

**For More Information Call
California Parenting Institute
Prevent Child Abuse Program
at (707) 585-6108 ext. 101
or
County of Sonoma Human Services Department
Families, Youth and Children’s Services
at (707) 565– 4300**

**Myths and Facts
About Child Abuse and Neglect**

MYTH #1: It's only abuse if it's violent.

Fact: Physical abuse is just one type of child abuse. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.

About First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 Sonoma County funds children's health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on *First 5 Sonoma County* and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit www.first5sonomacounty.org