

Child protection policy

Child abuse and neglect have devastating effects on children that can last a lifetime. Abuse and neglect can increase the possibility of a child having a developmental delay and long-term emotional disabilities. These children also have an increased risk of involvement in drugs, sexually risky behavior and behavioral disabilities. Child abuse may be physical, sexual or emotional.

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

Children who are experiencing abuse or neglect may show observable signs.

They may be dropped off at school without appropriate clothing for the season, left without supervision too early at school or not picked up well after hours. They may have behavior problems such as acting out or getting multiple discipline referrals. They may also show more withdrawn and emotional behaviors such as crying easily, keeping to themselves or difficulty relating to peers and adults. They are also at risk for poor school performance.

Parents or other caregivers who abuse their children are often under a great deal of stress and may give vent to their stress on the children. They may feel as if there is no problem with their behavior toward the child. In such households, discipline tends to be severe, and physical punishment is the norm. Parents may be emotionally abusive, using harsh language, putdowns and mocking behavior toward their children.

IDENTIFYING CHILD NEGLECT

Child neglect involves denying a child what he needs for basic survival.

Child neglect is an act of omission or commission leading to the denial of child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, emotional, or psychological. Physical neglect entails denial of food, clothing, appropriate medical care or supervision. It may include abandonment.

Inadequate clothing, nutrition, educational and emotional support are examples. Meeting a child's physical needs such as adequate housing, medical care or basic supervision are often problems in neglectful households. Children who are neglected are often poorly prepared for school and may miss school a lot.

These children may steal from others in an attempt to get the things they need. They may appear unwashed and unkempt. They may be sick repeatedly for long periods of time. In some cases, children who are not adequately supervised will become involved in drugs or alcohol, and the parents may be unaware or not care.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse occurs when an adult hurts a child causing injury. Physical injury may be caused by hitting, excessive spanking, cigarette burns (or other types of burns or scalds), shaking,

kicking or other types of physical violence. Bruises, burns and cuts in unusual places are possible signs of abuse. Bruises on knees and scraped elbows, however, are usually common injuries children get while playing. When parents and children give differing explanations for the cause of an injury, abuse may be a factor.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse leaves scars on children that cannot always be seen. Emotional abuse negatively affects a child's psychological and emotional development and may have long-term effects on cognitive development as well. Most emotional abuse is verbal. In these cases, parents or caregivers continually put the child down, blame him for problems that he could not possibly have caused, call him names or use similar forms of verbal abuse.

Emotional abuse may also involve non-physical punishment designed to humiliate, shame or terrify the child.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult has inappropriate sexual involvement with a child. It may involve sexual talking or texting or any physical contact such as intercourse, sodomy or touching. As with other forms of abuse, sexual abuse has devastating long-term effects on a child's psychological and physiological development.

HOW TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE?

Parents are responsible for doing all they can to keep their children from being in situations that make them vulnerable.

- Talk to your child about staying safe. Let the child listen to you & engage.
- Make safety rules and plans for every situation, review the safety rules.
- Help your child build self-esteem and confidence.
- Teach your child effective communication strategies.
- A child should know that a decision is actually a choice, and that each choice has consequences.
- Respect your child's decisions. Let him bear the consequences of his decisions and
- Tell your child it is alright to be scared.
- Tell your child that any abuse that happens is not their fault.
- Be a good listener, be patient, find time for your child.
- Be a good role model for your child
- Be alert for signs of trouble – Listen to your child talk about adults they spend time with. If your child seems afraid or described an unusually close relationship, learn more.

WRAPPING UP

Under the POCSO Act 2012 School staff members are required by law to report incidents of suspected abuse of children.

Reporting abuse is a critical first step in protecting the child and getting the family the help it needs to stop the cycle of abuse and neglect.