

Signs of Child Abuse

(Thank you to Children's Cove for the information below.)

Indicators of child abuse that can include but are not limited to the signs listed.

Some signs of a child's experience and violence or abuse are more obvious than others. Trust your instincts. Suspected abuse is enough of a reason to contact an organization such as Children's Cove in Hyannis. The phone number is 508-375-0410. You do not need proof.

1. **Unexplained injuries.** Signs of physical abuse may include unexplained injuries. Also you may hear unconvincing explanation of the child's injuries.
2. **Changes in behavior.** Abuse can lead to many changes in a child's behavior. Abused children appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.
3. **Returning to earlier behaviors** such as thumb-sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark or strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.
4. **Fear of going home.** Children may express apprehension about going places with the person abusing them.
5. **Changes in eating.** The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating habits which may result in weight gain or weight loss.
6. **Changes in sleeping.** Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep, and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.
7. **Changes in school performance and attendance.** Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to the adults trying to hide the children's injuries from authorities.
8. **Lack of personal care or hygiene.** Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.
9. **Risk taking behaviors.** Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.
10. **Inappropriate sexual behaviors.** Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language.

If the child discloses abuse:

DO:

- Remain calm.
- Believe the child.
- Allow the child to talk.
- Show interest and concern.
- Reassure and support the child.
- Take action. It could save a child's life.

DON'T:

- Panic or overreact.
- Press the child to talk.
- Promise anything you can't control.
- Confront the offender.
- Blame or minimize the child's feelings.
- Overwhelm the child with questions

Children's Cove, Hyannis. 508-375-0410

www.childrencove.org