



Prevention Strategies

Our Kids : Our Business

*No one person can do everything,
but everyone can do something,
and together we can create change for the better.*

Volunteer your time. Get involved with other parents in your community. Help vulnerable children and their families. Start a playgroup.

Discipline your children thoughtfully. Never discipline your child when you are upset. Give yourself time to calm down. Remember that discipline is a way to teach your child. Use privileges to encourage good behavior and time-outs to help your child regain control.

Examine your behavior. Abuse is not just physical. Both words and actions can inflict deep, lasting wounds. Be a nurturing parent. Use your actions to show children and other adults that conflicts can be settled without hitting or yelling.

Educate yourself and others. Simple support for children and parents can be the best way to prevent child abuse. After-school activities, parent education classes, mentoring programs, and respite care are some of the many ways to keep children safe from harm. Be a voice in support of these efforts in your community.

Teach children their rights. When children are taught they are special and have the right to be safe, they are less likely to think abuse is their fault, and more likely to report an offender.

Support prevention programs. Too often, intervention occurs only after abuse is reported. Greater investments are needed in programs that have been proven to stop the abuse before it occurs - such as family counseling and home visits by nurses who provide assistance for newborns and their parents.

Know what child abuse is. Physical and sexual abuse clearly constitute maltreatment, but so does neglect, or the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide a child with needed food, clothing, and care. Children can also be emotionally abused when they are rejected, berated, or continuously isolated.

Know the signs. Unexplained injuries aren't the only signs of abuse. Depression, fear of a certain adult, difficulty trusting others or making friends, sudden changes in eating or sleeping patterns, inappropriate sexual behavior, poor hygiene, secrecy, and hostility are often signs of family problems and may indicate a child is being neglected or physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.

Report abuse. If you witness a child being harmed or see evidence of abuse, make a report to your state's child protective services department or local police. When talking to a child about abuse, listen carefully, assure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling an adult, and affirm that he or she is not responsible for what happened.

Invest in kids. Encourage leaders in the community to be supportive of children and families. Ask employers to provide family-friendly work environments. Ask your local and national lawmakers to support legislation to better protect our children and to improve their lives. **(OVER)**

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

[RCW 26-44-020 \(12\)](#) defines abuse and neglect as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. Abuse and neglect does NOT include the physical discipline of a child as defined in [RCW 9A.16.100](#).

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.

Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.

Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.

Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.

Lacks adult supervision.

Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.

Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:

Shows little concern for the child.

Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home.

Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.

Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.

Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.

Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:

Rarely touch or look at each other.

Consider their relationship entirely negative.

State that they do not like each other.

Author: national Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (DHHS)

Healthy Children, Healthy Families, Healthy Community

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