



# What is Child Abuse?

## Definitions & Indicators

*Most children enter foster care with the goal of reunifying with their birth families. Unfortunately, for some families, the barriers are too great, and it falls to LCCS to find new, forever families for children.*



### Abuse generally falls into three categories:

- 1. Physical Abuse:** The non-accidental injury to a child.
- 2. Sexual Abuse:** Any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child. The act may be for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator or a third party. This would, therefore, include not only anyone who actively participated in the activity, but also, anyone who allowed it. (Includes rape, touching, fondling, or involving a child in pornography)
- 3. Emotional Abuse:** Chronic or consistent attitude or acts that interfere with the psychological and social development of a child, such as criticizing, insulting, rejecting or withholding love from a child.

## Abuse Indicators

### Indicators of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained, chronic or repeated bruising.
- Unexplained burns.
- Other unexplained or repeated injuries.
- Behavioral extremes (withdrawal, aggression, regression).
- Excessive fear of the parent or caregiver.
- Unusual shyness, wariness of physical contact.
- Attempt to hide injuries.
- Depression or excessive crying.
- Antisocial behavior, such as substance abuse, truancy or running away.

### Indicators of Emotional Abuse:

- Eating disorders.
- Speech disorders, such as stuttering.
- Weight or height significantly below the norm.
- Flat or bald spots on an infant's head.
- Nervous disorders such as hives, rashes, facial tics, or stomach aches.
- Habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging.
- Regressive behaviors: thumb sucking, "baby talk," etc.
- Poor relations with peers.
- Self-isolation.
- Cruel behavior to other children or animals.
- Substance abuse, excessive risk taking, suicide attempts, prostitution, delinquency.
- Fire setting.

### Indicators of Sexual Abuse:

- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Pregnancy.
- Bruises or bleeding from external genitals, vagina or anal region.
- Genital discharge.
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothes.
- Frequent, unexplained sore throats, yeast or urinary infections.
- Poor peer relationships, inability to relate to children of same age.
- Regressive behaviors, such as thumb sucking, bedwetting, fear of the dark.
- Sudden changes in behavior.
- Promiscuity or seductive behavior.
- Aggression or delinquency.
- Truancy or chronic running away.
- Prostitution.
- Substance abuse.
- Reluctance to participate in recreational activity.
- Recurrent nightmares, disturbed sleep patterns, or fear of the dark.
- Sudden decline in school performance.
- In young children, preoccupation with his/her sexual organs, his/her parents' or other children's.

*"Abused Child," as defined by the Ohio Revised Code, Section 2151.031*

## Neglect Indicators

**Neglect** is the failure to act on behalf of a child. It is an act of omission and generally falls into three categories:

- 1. Physical Neglect:** Failure to meet the child's basic requirements for physical development, such as supervision, housing, clothing, medical attention, nutrition or support.
- 2. Emotional Neglect:** Failure to provide the support and/or affection a child needs for psychological and social development.
- 3. Educational Neglect:** Failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs.

*Note: Child neglect can occur at any time within any family, neighborhood or community. Cultural standards of care in the community and poverty may be contributing factors that indicate the family is in need of information or assistance/resources.*

### Physical Indicators of Neglect

- Chronic uncleanliness or poor hygiene including lice, scabies, severe or untreated diaper rash.
- Untreated illness or injury.
- Unsuitable clothing, or missing key articles of clothing—socks, shoes, or a coat.
- Height and weight significantly below age level.

### Behavioral Indicators of Neglect

- Chronic hunger, tiredness or lethargy.
- Begging or collecting leftovers.
- Unusual school attendance (frequent or chronic absence, lateness, coming to school early or leaving late).
- Assuming adult responsibilities.
- Vandalism or delinquency.

## Abandoned Child

Ohio law states “a child is presumed abandoned when the parents of the child have failed to visit or maintain contact with the child for more than ninety days.” Even if the parents re-establish contact with the child after 90 days, the child is still considered abandoned.

*Abandoned child defined by Ohio Administrative Code*

## Dependent Child

A “dependent child” is any child:

- Who is homeless or destitute or without adequate parental care through no fault of the child's parents, guardian or custodian.
- Who lacks adequate parental care by reason of the mental or physical condition of the child's parents, guardian or custodian.
- Whose condition or environment is such as to warrant the state, in the interest of the child, in assuming the child's guardianship.

*Dependent child defined by Ohio Revised Code, Section 2151.04*

## Deserted Child

A ‘deserted child’ is a child whose parent has voluntarily delivered the child to an emergency medical service worker, peace officer or hospital employee without expressing intent to return for the child.

*Deserted child defined by Ohio Revised Code, Section 2151.3515*

