

2020

*Child Abuse and
Neglect
Prevention Month*

Toolkit



April is National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. Please join us during April Prevention Month by promoting and strengthening child abuse prevention efforts in Wisconsin.

Children are the foundation of our society, our community and our future. Children raised in loving and supportive environments are more likely to prosper academically and financially, becoming successful contributing members of society. Wisconsin must be a leader and champion for all of our children. We need to enhance the success of our communities by promoting programs and policies that seek to support the lives of children and families. Preventing child abuse and neglect results in better childhoods, ultimately saving millions of dollars currently needed for the services that address the short and long-term effects of abuse on children, their families, and our communities. The savings generated through prevention can be used to serve our communities in other ways, making them safer, economically successful, and great places to live and grow.

In April, we come together to participate in activities that show our commitment to children and families. This toolkit provides information to communities, organizations, and individuals on how to promote child abuse and neglect prevention efforts in April and throughout the year. Please feel free to use the ideas presented or use the information to develop your own ideas. It doesn't matter how big or small your effort. Prevention is about making sure our communities know and show that all children deserve great childhoods.

Join the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin (PCAW), a program of Children's Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families in our April Prevention Month activities.



Table of Contents

April is National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month	1
Create a Plan for Action!	3
Ways to Promote Child Abuse Prevention in Your Community	5
Media Tips	8
Social Media Tips	9
30 Ways to Connect with a Child	11
30 More Ways to Connect with a Child	12
2020 Wear Blue Day Flyer	13
2020 Governor's Proclamation	14
Sample Letters and Press Releases	15
Understanding Child Maltreatment	20
Recognizing the Signs of Abuse	23
Recognizing and Reporting Sentinel Injuries	24
Reporting Suspected Child Maltreatment	25



Create a Plan for Action!

This toolkit provides ideas for planning a Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month campaign, as well as ways to maintain those efforts throughout the year. Developing a strategy early will ensure the best outcomes for your organization. Use these steps to create your action plan.

Build a community partnership

When it comes to building community awareness there is strength in numbers. Join resources by partnering with other organizations, business leaders, faith-based groups, families, teachers, law enforcement, students, or other adults to implement effective prevention strategies that promote safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families.

Understand the issue of child abuse and neglect

Wisconsin recognizes six categories of child maltreatment, which include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, the manufacture of methamphetamine, and abuse to unborn children. To learn more about the types and conditions of child maltreatment please visit *Understanding Child Maltreatment* on page 5 and 6 of this toolkit. Additional information can be found by visiting preventchildabusewi.org. State and localized data is available through the Department of Children and Families at dcf.wisconsin.gov.

Outline your strategy

Your campaign will have greater success if you have an organized plan with a timeline. Think about the audience you are trying to reach, and tailor your message to reach that audience. Determine the steps needed to create a campaign, and the resources you require to implement it. Connect with your community partners and combine resources to ensure your message reaches as many people as possible. Don't forget to share your ideas and events by emailing pcaw@chw.org so we can promote your events statewide through our social media page.

Choose activities to implement

Our toolkit is just a jumping off point to the variety of activities you can implement. We encourage you to think outside the box and be creative. Other groups have sponsored community kick-off events, school events and assemblies, family fun days, community walk/run, trainings, and coloring contests. The possibilities are endless!

Involve the media (traditional and social media)

Spread the word! Press releases, letters to the editor, PSAs, radio and television interviews, and websites are great ways to reach out through traditional media channels. Social media networking through blogs, podcasts, photo, and video sharing are other ways to spread the word. Sample press releases and social marketing ideas, which can be adjusted for your local events, are provided in the toolkit.

Check back for more

We will continue to add materials to our websites to provide you with updated resources to help make your local event(s) successful. April is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, but you can also plan events throughout the year to build awareness and to strengthen families in your community.



Ways to Promote Child Abuse Prevention in Your Community

Trainings

- Host a Stewards of Children™ training to educate adults to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. It is the job of adults to protect our children. Find out more at a2awisconsin.org
- Arrange to host a *Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work* training to educate professionals who work with children and families on effective strategies to strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. To request more information or to schedule a training, please complete the [Training Request Form](#) found on the Prevention Board's website.
- Host an *ACE Interface* training to educate individuals on the impact Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) have on an individual's health and longevity and the positive impact the prevention of ACE's can have on the community. Visit [SaintA](#) for more information.
- Arrange a *Triple P Seminar* training for parents and caregivers. Triple P is an approach to parenting that helps families gain the skills and confidence to handle life's ups and downs. Contact PreventionBoard@wisconsin.gov to discuss options and to schedule a training.



Public Awareness

- Five for Families is a statewide public awareness campaign developed as a universal prevention strategy by the Prevention Board. The primary goal of the campaign is to increase knowledge of the Protective Factors Framework, an evidence-informed, strengths-based approach to child maltreatment prevention and family well-being promotion created by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Visit FiveforFamilies.org for more information.
- Get involved with the statewide *CLICK for Babies* Campaign, clickforbabies.org.



Visual Displays

Set up a display at your work or school site, public library or local business, using symbols such as marbles, M&Ms or pinwheels to represent one of the following statistics:

- Number of children/families who participated in your programs (playgroups, parenting classes, etc.) this past year.
- Number of children born in your town, county during 2018.
- Have children color pinwheel coloring sheets (available at www.preventchildabusewi.org) and display them at your site or in public places such as a bank, library, etc.
- Decorate “Donation Jars” and put them in stores to collect money for your program, a program that works with children/families, or for Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin.
- Decorate your site with pinwheels. You can purchase pinwheels from Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin at preventchildabusewi.org.
- At work, employees give a donation to wear *blue* jeans on one day. Monies raised would be given to a child abuse prevention agency.

NOTE: The statistic should reflect something positive in the community about children, not the number of child abuse reports or victims.



Community Involvement

Ask local businesses to display informational or promotional materials regarding Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

- Host a parent support group in a local church, school, library or social service agency. Host a family fun event; such as a family story time, craft event, family game or movie night.
- Work with a local Family Resource Center, Community Center, Family Respite Center or Crisis Nursery to collect needed items.
- Involve Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, church groups, youth groups, school groups or classes, and other volunteers to distribute pinwheel pictures or pinwheels throughout your community.
- Ask schools, faith organizations, businesses, and others to share messages about strengthening families in their newsletter and bulletins. See sample social media examples on page 16.
- Advocate in local healthcare systems to promote the *Period of PURPLE Crying* or other Abusive Head Trauma Prevention initiatives.
- Connect with your local home visiting services, start one if none are available in your community.
- Contact local area politicians to advocate for city/county recognition of April Prevention Month.
- Connect with other organizations that have awareness events that align with April Prevention Month messaging

Stay Connected

- Visit our websites:
 - Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin: preventchildabusewi.org
 - Department of Children and Families: dcf.wisconsin.gov
 - Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board: preventionboard.wi.gov
- Learn more about [Pinwheels for Prevention](#)
- Connect to community partners, services and local stakeholders via social media to promote, share and collaborate on prevention efforts.

Media Tips

One of the best ways to reach a broad audience is to make the most of the available media platforms. Planning is an important step in building your message for prevention. These media tips will help you plan and prepare to promote your prevention efforts and activities through both traditional and social media outlets.

Consider the message

We encourage organizations to take a positive approach to prevention in an effort to increase participation and engagement. People respond better when we provide information on the positive outcomes of our prevention strategies. Some ways to promote the importance of building productive and prosperous futures for our children include:

- Educating and engaging community members to focus on child abuse prevention.
- Reminding the community that being a parent is challenging.
- Highlighting approaches and resources that provide families with support.
- Encouraging community members to help lead, plan, and participate in events so that they have the opportunity to contribute and become invested.

Establish your message for prevention

Build your message to motivate people to action.

- Create a call to action through your social media platforms indicating how individuals, groups, and organizations can participate in prevention efforts.
- Share success stories from prevention efforts both within and outside the community.
- Be clear and consistent in your commitments to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- State the importance of prevention in combating child maltreatment.
- Use images to portray a positive and engaged community.



Social Media Tips

Social media is a perfect way to get people excited about your campaign. Use social media to engage communities and organizations. Start a dialogue and follow the conversations that take place. By monitoring and being actively involved in the discussion about child abuse and prevention, you are able to:

- Frame your message appropriately.
- Develop successful campaigns.
- Respond quickly to negative feedback.
- Positively influence how the public perceives prevention efforts.
- Share positive responses through retweets, shares, and likes.
- Control the flow of incorrect information by answering questions or responding to misconceptions that people may have.

Below are tips for using social media. Use these samples and variations on these same themes during April Prevention Month and throughout the year during your prevention initiatives.

General Social Media Tips

- Post in the late afternoon to increase engagement.
- Include a call to action asking people to share, like, retweet or comment on your post.
- Use visual or interactive content like photos, videos, and links in your postings.
- Respond to comments and posts to foster dialogue.
- Live stream prevention efforts.

During April Prevention Month

- Remember to make your Prevention Month posts **public**.
- *Catalog posts and tweets with the hashtag: #PinwheelsforPreventionWI*
- *For safety and security purposes, **do not** include any personal or private information in public social media posts.*



Facebook - Sample Post

- April is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month! Throughout the month, we'll be holding events and working to ensure that all children in Wisconsin have the great childhood they deserve. Leave a comment and let us know what you are doing. Share with your friends and get them involved too!
- Simple actions can make a big difference. Volunteer at a pre-school, spruce up a community playground, or provide a struggling family with a ride or a meal. You can make a difference! Leave us a comment and tell us how you're making an impact during Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

Twitter - Sample Post

- We all have a role to play in supporting Wisconsin families. Learn more about what you can do at preventchildabusewi.org
- Celebrate Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month by planting a pinwheel garden to honor those who helped you

Instagram - Sample Post

- Make a difference during April Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month! Learn more at preventchildabusewi.org
- April is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month! Throughout the month, we'll be holding events and working to ensure that all children in Wisconsin have the great childhood they deserve. Leave a comment and let us know what you are doing. Share with your friends and get them involved too!

For additional outreach ideas and social media sample posts, please visit the [Children's Bureau's Prevention Month Webpage](#) or [Prevent Child Abuse America](#)

Some ideas presented are adapted with permission from Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky

30 Ways to Connect with a Child

Playing and interacting with your child is one of the most important things you can do to help your child learn. This is also a time to build a bond with your child and help him or her develop a sense of competence and self-worth. Below are 30 ideas for connecting with your child:

1. Read books together – each pick out your favorite.
2. Draw a picture to share with a family member or friend.
3. Talk about what you are thankful for.
4. Help another family member.
5. See what will sink in water.
6. Visit the library and get your child their own card.
7. Have a family game night.
8. Have a picnic outside.
9. Pretend to be dinosaurs.
10. Watch a television show together.
11. Eat a meal together.
12. Look for circle shapes inside and outside.
13. Learn a new skill.
14. Paint your favorite thing.
15. Volunteer together as a family.
16. Dance to music.
17. Go to the park or playground.
18. Pretend you are a circus performer (tightrope walker, ringmaster, etc.).
19. Make silly faces.
20. Give lots of hugs.
21. Turn off the TV for a day.
22. Leave a love note for someone on their pillow.
23. Coordinate a treasure hunt around your house.
24. Make a list of things you are thankful for.
25. Bake or decorate cookies.
26. Choose something to count (trucks, dogs, etc.) and take a walk to look for them.
27. Watch the sunset.
28. Finger paint.
29. Plant some flower seeds.
30. Tell your child that you love him or her.



Remember to let interactions with children happen at the child's pace and take cues from the child when doing something new. Keep in mind that children need more time to learn and move from one idea to another. A parent's participation, encouragement, and positive feedback are critical to helping a child play, interact, and learn. Learn more at preventchildabusewi.org.

30 More Ways to Connect with a Child

Playing and interacting with your child is one of the most important things you can do to help your child learn. This is also a time to build a bond with your child and help him or her develop a sense of competence and self-worth. Below are 30 ideas for connecting with your child:

1. Put a puzzle together.
2. Share a favorite memory.
3. Laugh together.
4. Clean out a closet and donate unused clothing and/or toys.
5. Look at family pictures.
6. No screen time for one evening.
7. Make trail mix.
8. Have breakfast for dinner.
9. Lay outside and look at the clouds.
10. Say “please” and “thank you”.
11. Take turns reading out loud.
12. Sing songs.
13. Let your child decide what to wear (give limited choices).
14. Draw or color together.
15. Play outside.
16. Listen to music while doing chores.
17. Share the best part of your day.
18. Give your child 15 minutes of your undivided attention.
19. Make a fort with blankets.
20. Take a walk and look for different trees and plants.
21. Learn a fact about your town.
22. Bake cookies and share with a friend.
23. Make a card to tell someone you are thinking of them.
24. Pretend you are riding on a train.
25. Learn 5 new words – how to spell and/or their meaning.
26. Tell your child why they are special.
27. Make a new recipe.
28. Have a picnic indoors.
29. Exercise together (touch toes, stretches, etc.)
30. Tell jokes and riddles.



And always tell your child that you love him or her.

Remember to let interactions with children happen at the child’s pace, and take cues from the child when doing something new. Keep in mind that children need more time to learn and move from one idea to another. A parent’s participation, encouragement, and positive feedback are critical to helping a child play, interact, and learn. Learn more at www.preventchildabusewi.org.

2020 Wear Blue Day Flyer

April is National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month



Wear BLUE on April 3, 2020 to show your support.

Every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment. Show your support by promoting and strengthening prevention efforts in Wisconsin.

Take a picture of yourself and your colleagues wearing blue and share it on your favorite social media platform using the **#pinwheelsforpreventionwi** hashtag.



[Download the Wear Blue Day Poster](#)

2020 Governor's Proclamation

STATE of WISCONSIN



OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

Proclamation

WHEREAS; child abuse and neglect are pervasive, yet preventable issues in our communities; and

WHEREAS; communities and family support networks can and should prioritize the safety and well-being of all children; and

WHEREAS; child maltreatment can lead to a broad range of short and long-term physical and emotional health problems; and

WHEREAS; research demonstrates that building family protective factors – like Social and Emotional Competence of Children, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Social Connections, and Parental Resilience and Concrete Supports in Times of Need – promotes the optimal development of children and reduces the likelihood of child abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS; child maltreatment can be reduced by ensuring families are supported in building protective factors through strengths-based policies, programming, and public awareness; and

WHEREAS; during the month of April, the State of Wisconsin embraces Pinwheels for Prevention® as the pinwheel has come to serve as the physical embodiment, or reminder, of the great childhoods we want for all children; and

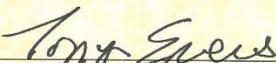
WHEREAS; all Wisconsinites have the responsibility to care for kids across our state, ensuring they grow up with protective factors in their homes, schools, and communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Evers, Governor of the State of Wisconsin,
do hereby proclaim April 2020 as

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT PREVENTION MONTH

throughout the State of Wisconsin and I commend this observance to all of our state's residents.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my hand and caused the Great
Seal of the State of Wisconsin to be affixed.
Done at the Capitol in the City of Madison
this 19th day of March 2020.


TONY EVERS
GOVERNOR

By the Governor


DOUGLAS LA FOLLETTE
Secretary of State

Sample Letters and Press Releases

To:

The Honorable _____

(Name of your Senator)

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

I believe that children deserve to grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. I support legislation and policies at the federal, state, and local levels that assist children and families, promote child abuse prevention efforts, and create caring communities which allow children and families to thrive.

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative/Senator (last name),

Please join our local and national efforts to draw attention to the importance of preventing child abuse and neglect during April 2020, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

We need your support for Wisconsin by helping citizens become actively involved in stopping child abuse and neglect before it happens. Please lend your leadership by publicly promoting the message that together we can be instrumental in preventing abuse and neglect.

Ways to promote prevention efforts:

- Advocate for prevention programs and the importance of strong families.
- Spread the word that we can save lives and money by preventing child abuse and neglect instead of treating the lifelong harm caused by childhood adversity and trauma after the fact.
- **Allocate** funds to organizations and other resources designed to stop child abuse.
- Promote and support legislation that grows healthy children and families.
- Make child abuse prevention a priority every day rather than one month per year.

As a public leader, your involvement will draw much needed attention to this important issue while motivating caring citizens to act. Please help spread the word that we can and will make a difference **in the lives of Wisconsin children.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Print on your agency/organization letterhead

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Town/City/County Name) Residents Support Child Abuse Prevention Efforts by Wearing Blue

(Your agency/organization name) encourages (town, city, county) residents to wear blue on Friday, April 3, 2020, to help promote Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. We believe that every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable and nurturing environment. Children are the foundation of our society, our community and our future. When we focus on preventing child abuse and neglect, the results are better childhoods, leading to healthier adults and stronger communities.

Please join us on April 3rd by wearing blue to help promote and strengthen child abuse efforts in our community.

To learn more about child abuse prevention, visit:

- ___(your agency website)___
- Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin: preventchildabusewi.org
- Department of Children and Families: dcf.wisconsin.gov
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board: preventionboard.wi.gov



Print on your agency/organization letterhead

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month

City/State April is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. This month and throughout the year, (your agency/organization name) encourages all individuals and organizations to support child abuse and neglect prevention efforts in Wisconsin. Children do well when their parents do well. Supporting families and ensuring parents have the knowledge, skills and resources they need are effective ways to protect children from the risk of child abuse and neglect. Community members can support one another by:

- Taking time to talk to parents in your neighborhood – get to know them.
- Sharing local resources with families.
- Advocating for legislation and funding which support family programs within your community.
- Donating new or gently used clothing, toys to programs that support families with children.
- Bringing a meal or groceries to a family with young children.
- Organizing a family fun event – such as a family story night, game or movie night.

To learn more about child abuse prevention and for more ideas how to become involved; visit:

- (your agency website)
- Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin: preventchildabusewi.org
- Department of Children and Families: dcf.wisconsin.gov
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board: preventionboard.wi.gov

(SAMPLE RELEASE)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Pinwheel display represents number of families served by ABC Family Resource Center

WHO: ABC Family Resource Center

WHAT: Display of more than 200 pinwheels.

WHEN: April 1-30, 2020.

WHERE: ABC Family Resource Center, 111 Main Street, Anytown, WI.

WHY: This display was set up in celebration of national Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION FACTS: Programs that support families, such as home visitation programs and family resource centers, are proven to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Studies show that children do well when their parents do well. Supporting families and ensuring parents have knowledge, skills and resources they need to parent effectively can help protect children from the risk of child abuse and neglect.

The pinwheels in front of the ABC Family Resource Center represent the number of children who participated in their programs during 2019. These programs include home visitation, play and learn, and family events.

ABC Family Resource Center encourages all individuals and organizations to:

- Take time to talk to parents in your neighborhood – get to know them.
- Share local resources with families.
- Advocate for legislation and funding which support family programs within your community.
- Donate new or gently used clothing, toys to programs that support families with children.
- Bring a meal or groceries to a family with young children.
- Organize a family fun event – such as a family story night, game or movie night.

To learn more about child abuse prevention and for more ideas how to become involved; visit:

- (your agency website)
- Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin: preventchildabusewi.org
- Department of Children and Families: dcf.wisconsin.gov
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board: preventionboard.wi.gov



Understanding Child Maltreatment

Child abuse can occur anywhere and is not restricted to a particular group, race, income, or location. Wherever there are children, there is the potential for abuse. In order to do your part, it is important to understand and recognize the warning signs for child abuse and neglect.

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Child abuse is an act or failure to act by a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or that creates an imminent risk of serious harm to a child. Child abuse typically refers to harm caused by parents or other caregivers, but acquaintances, strangers, and other persons may also be responsible for abusing a child. Child abuse and neglect in Wisconsin are legally defined in Wisconsin's Children's Code (Chapter 48).

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical beatings
- Slapping
- Hitting
- Burns
- Strangulation
- Human bites

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes sexual intercourse, exploitation, and any sexual contact, touching or non-touching, with a child. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Non-touching sexual offenses:
 - Frank discussions about sexual acts intended to arouse the child's interest
 - Obscene telephone calls
 - Exhibitionism
 - Voyeurism
 - Pornography
 - Allowing children to witness or hear sexual acts
- Touching sexual offenses:
 - Rape
 - Incest
 - Touching of breasts
 - Attempted intercourse
 - Fondling of the genitals

Emotional Abuse

Emotional damage is harm to a child’s psychological or intellectual functioning. Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that attacks children’s emotional development, their spirit and self-concept, and makes them feel unloved, unlovable, and worthless. It is thought to be the most common form of abuse. Emotional abuse usually accompanies other forms of abuse and has long lasting effects on the individual. This type of abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, or rejecting a child
- Withholding love, support, guidance
- Manipulation

Neglect

Neglect is failure, refusal, or inability on the part of a parent or caregiver to provide necessary care that may seriously endanger the physical health of a child, except for reasons of poverty. Neglect may include or be characterized by a lack or absence of the following basic care needs:

- Proper food
- Medical and dental care
- Hygiene
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Education
- Love and attention
- Supervision and setting limits
- Abandonment

For information on state and county specific child maltreatment incidents, please visit the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families’ annual [Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Report](#)

Unborn Child Abuse

Child abuse in Wisconsin also includes cases where an unborn child is endangered due to the expectant mothers “habitual lack of self-control in the use of alcohol beverages, controlled substances or controlled substance analogs, exhibited to a severe degree.” Unborn child abuse includes serious physical harm to the unborn child or the risk of serious physical harm to the child when born as a result of the mother’s substance abuse.

Manufacturing Methamphetamine

The manufacturing of methamphetamine is also recognized as a form of child abuse or neglect in cases where:

- A child is physically present during the manufacture.
- It occurs in a child’s home, on the premises of a child’s home, or in a motor vehicle located on the premises of a child’s home.
- Under any circumstances a reasonable person should have known that the manufacture would be seen, smelled, or heard by a child.



Recognizing the Signs of Abuse

Children who are abused may or may not show physical or behavioral signs of being maltreated. In some instances, there may be an unusual pattern or location of physical injuries that suggests abuse. In other cases, there may be no physical indicators, but the child's behavior has changed in a questionable and observable way.

Educate yourself and others about some of the signs of possible child abuse, including:

- Physical signs
 - Injuries such as bruises, burns, welts, or broken bones that are unexplained or have implausible explanations
 - Missing hair
 - Poor hygiene
 - Injuries or redness around the genitals
 - Multiple injuries at different stages of healing
 - Improperly treated injury or medical condition
 - Slowed physical development
 - Unattended medical or dental needs
 - Consistent hunger
 - Inappropriate clothing for weather conditions
 - Speech delay
 - Frequent tardiness or absence from school
- Behavioral signs
 - Declining school performance or involvement
 - Lack of concentration
 - Difficulty making and keeping friends
 - Signs of persistent unhappiness or depression
 - Withdrawn from others
 - Displaying angry or aggressive behavior
 - Destruction of property
 - Hurting themselves or others
 - Low self-esteem
 - Problems expressing feelings
 - Fatigue, listlessness, or regularly falling asleep in class
 - Constantly seeking attention or approval
 - Sleeping problems or insomnia
 - Reluctance to go home
 - Lack of parental interest or participation
 - Begging or stealing food
 - Unusual fears
 - Sexualized behaviors
 - Unusual knowledge of sex for the child's age or developmental stage

Recognizing and Reporting Sentinel Injuries

Did you know that small, apparently insignificant injuries such as bruises or mouth injuries in young infants are often from child abuse? These seemingly trivial injuries are known as “sentinel injuries,” because they should not be found in a baby who is unable to pull to a stand and take a few steps.

Sentinel injuries are so minor that explanations about their causes being accidental may seem completely plausible and believable. But injuries that are common in walking children should not be present in infants who are not yet able to walk. **Babies who are not cruising should not be bruising.** Sentinel injuries are early warning signs that, when recognized and responded to, may prevent future, more severe injuries to a child.

- A sentinel bruise is a bruise present anywhere on an infant’s body. Even a tiny bruise can be an indication of a problem.
- Mouth injuries in young infants are often caused when an angry or frustrated caregiver “rams” something into the infant’s mouth, causing injury to the frenulum under the tongue or upper lip or to other soft tissue in the mouth.
- Non-mobile infants rarely have any bruising and never have mouth injuries, burns or broken bones from normal care and normal activities.
- Sentinel injuries are not limited to infants.

Please seek medical attention for an infant with bruising or other small injuries. Doing so can lead to early detection of a possible medical problem or may prevent the escalation of abuse. Please be aware of these early warning signs and report any concerns for child abuse or neglect to child protective services and/or law enforcement. Contact information can be found on the Department of Children and Families’ [website](#).

For more information and a free training on sentinel injuries, please visit the [Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership’s website](#).



Reporting Suspected Child Maltreatment

Reporting suspected or known child abuse is a brave act that may prevent a child from being harmed or even save a child's life. Any concerned individual who suspects or knows that a child is being threatened, abused or neglected needs to report that information to child protective services or law enforcement.

A report of alleged child maltreatment may be made by anyone. Voluntary reports come from family, friends, neighbors and other caring community members. Mandated reporting is a federal and statutory requirement for specific professionals and service providers, including but not limited to schools, medical staff, law enforcement, and social workers, who are legally bound to make a report when maltreatment or threatened harm to a child is suspected or confirmed. Reporters do not have to prove or personally witness the maltreatment. The law is very clear – reports should also be made when abuse or neglect is **suspected** or where there is a **threat** that maltreatment may occur unless action is taken. (s. 48.981(3), Stats.) Please visit Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System for State of [Wisconsin Mandated Reporter Training](#).

Child abuse is sometimes visible, such as physical abuse that results in bruising or broken bones. Neglect may be evident when a vulnerable child is left unsupervised or when a parent has mental health or substance abuse issues that render him or her incapable of basic parenting. Other types of abuse such as emotional and sexual abuse are not as easily detected. All types of child abuse leave deep, lasting scars. The earlier children receive help, the greater chance they have to heal.

A report from a caring and concerned citizen or professional is often the first step in helping to protect a child and assist a family in need. When parents or other caregivers are unable or unwilling to protect their children, Wisconsin county and tribal agencies can step in and provide a full spectrum of services. First and foremost, child safety is assessed and managed. A team of caring and skilled professionals will work closely with the family to assess their strengths and needs. The family is connected to services and resources, with the team supporting them every step along the way.

If you are concerned about a child's safety, please contact the local county child protective services or law enforcement agency. Contact information can be found on the Department of Children and Families' [website](#).