



Types of Child Maltreatment

- **Physical Abuse** is physical injury inflicted on a child other than by accidental means. If the abuser acts deliberately and physical injury occurs, it is considered abuse, whether or not the abuser intended the actual injury.
Examples include non-accident related cuts, broken bones, burns, bites, brain injury or other internal injury.
- **Sexual Abuse** consists of engaging a child in sexual acts or sexual contact, exposing a child to sexual conduct or exploiting a child for the purpose of one's own or others' sexual gratification.
Examples include engaging in sexual behavior with a child, exposing one's genitals to a child, allowing a child to see or hear sexual acts, encouraging or allowing a child to be filmed or photographed while posing or acting sexually or permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.
- **Emotional Abuse** is a pattern of behavior that attacks children's emotional development, their spirit and self-concept, making them feel unloved, unlovable, and worthless and causing emotional damage. The state of Wisconsin defines emotional damage as, "harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning." Emotional abuse is thought to be the most common form of abuse, and often accompanies other forms of abuse. Emotional abuse has the longest lasting effect on individuals.
Examples include constantly criticizing, belittling, insulting or rejecting a child; withholding love, support or guidance from a child; or manipulating a child.
- **Neglect** is the failure, refusal or inability of a person responsible for a child, for reasons other than poverty, to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs to the extent that this lack endangers a child's physical, mental or emotional health.
Examples include failure to provide food, medical care, dental care, shelter, clothing, education, love, attention, limits or to ensure proper hygiene.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Who should report?

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. *Anyone* who suspects or knows that a child is being abused or neglected needs to report that information to child protective services or law enforcement.



Voluntary reports include those that come from family, friends, neighbors and other caring community members. [Mandated reporting](#) is a legal requirement for specific professionals and service providers.

How to know if it is truly abuse?

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 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. You do not need to *know* that a child is being abused to report; you only need to *suspect*. Child protective services and law enforcement have the expertise and responsibility to investigate and determine what next steps should be taken.

What happens to the child and family?

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.

[Reporting Contact Information](#)