



## Child Abuse

### The Facts

Child abuse consists of any act, willful or un-willful, that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Child abuse includes any damage done to a child, which cannot be reasonably explained and which often is represented by an injury or series of injuries appearing to be non-accidental in nature.

- In the United States, one million children per year are victims of child abuse
- 15 of every 1,000 children are victims of maltreatment (abuse & neglect)
- In Colorado, there were 5,082 incidents of child abuse and 30 fatalities in 1999.
- In 43 states, it has been reported that:
  - 76% of the perpetrators were parents or step-parents
  - 11% of the perpetrators were relatives
  - 2% of the perpetrators were caregivers

## Learn and Prevent

### Types of abuse children suffer

#### Physical abuse

This form of abuse is the most visible. It is defined as non-accidental trauma or physical injury. This includes hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, burning, pinching, hair pulling, biting, choking, throwing, shoving, whipping and paddling. Although difficult to imagine that any person would intentionally inflict harm on a child, many times physical abuse is the result of inappropriate or excessive physical discipline. An angry caregiver or parent may be unaware of the magnitude of force with which he or she handles a child.

#### Emotional abuse

This is commonly defined as a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with a child's positive emotional development.



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#### Emotional abuse

This is commonly defined as a pattern of behavior that can seriously interfere with a child's positive emotional development.

These patterns can include the following: constant rejection, shaming, name-calling, negative comparisons to others, yelling or screaming and declarations of worthlessness. This form of abuse leaves hidden scars that can manifest itself in insecurity, poor self-esteem, destructive behavior, angry acts and outbursts, withdrawal and poor development of basic life skills.

### **Sexual abuse**

This form of abuse indicates touching and non-touching sexual offenses between an adult and a child. This includes fondling, penetration, intercourse, exploitation, pornography, exhibitionism, child prostitution, group sex, oral sex or forced observation of sexual acts.

#### **Prevent child abuse by:**

- Being a nurturing parent. Children need to know that they are special and loved. Educate yourself about a child's development process so you will have reasonable expectations about a child's age-appropriate behavior.
- Helping a friend, neighbor or relative. Being a parent is not easy. Someone you know may be struggling with his or her parenting responsibilities. Offer a helping hand.
- Helping yourself. When the stresses of everyday life piles up, when you feel overwhelmed or out of control, take time out for yourself. Don't take it out on your child. Take a deep breath, count to ten. Know where you can turn for help when you need it.
- Never, never shake a baby! Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying.
- Getting involved. Advocate for service to help families. Ask community leaders, clergy, library and school to develop services and support groups to meet the needs of families and children.
- Monitor your child's television and computer use. Watching violent films or playing violent computer games can harm young children. It teaches that aggression is an acceptable way to handle frustration and to solve problems.
- Spend time with your children. Interact with your children in age-appropriate activities. Read with your children.

Produced by  
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Colorado Family Education, Resources & Training  
Colorado State University  
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Information for this PIP TIP collected from a variety of research based resources.

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