



Child Abuse

Violence in the home harms children. It's a known fact that children who live in a home where there is violence are significantly more at risk of being the victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and neglect than other children. Children can be harmed by seeing, hearing and being around violence, and they can also be the direct victims of abuse.

Child abuse is defined in the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act as: *“the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person.”*

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when a child's emotional, psychological or social well-being and sense of worth is continually battered. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms of abuse occur.

It can include a pattern of criticising, rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting and terrorising a child. It may result from exposure to domestic violence or involvement in illegal or anti-social activities.

The effects of this form of abuse are not always immediate or visible. Its long-lasting effects may only become evident as a child becomes older and begins to show difficult or disturbing behaviours or symptoms.

Neglect

Neglect is a pattern of behaviour that occurs over a period of time and results in impaired functioning or development of a child. It is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

Neglect may be:

- **Physical** Failure to provide necessary basic needs of food, shelter or warmth.



- **Medical** Failure to seek, obtain or follow through with medical care for the child.
- **Abandonment** Leaving a child or young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them and with no intention of returning.
- **Neglectful supervision** Failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision.
- **Refusal to assume parental responsibility** Unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate care for a child.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse can be caused from punching, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning or throwing a child. Physical abuse may also result from excessive or inappropriate discipline or violence within the family, and is considered abuse regardless of whether or not it was intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may be the result of a single episode or of a series of episodes.

Injuries to a child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts or bite marks, major fractures of the long bones or skull, to its most extreme form – the death of a child.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse includes acts or behaviours where an adult, older or more powerful person uses a child for a sexual purpose.

While it may involve a stranger, most sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts.

It includes any touching for sexual purpose; fondling of breasts, buttocks, genitals; oral sex; sexual intercourse; or an adult exposing themselves to the child, or seeking to have a child touch them for a sexual purpose. It also includes voyeurism, photographing children inappropriately, involving the child in pornographic activities or prostitution, or using the Internet and phone to initiate sexual conversations with children.



How domestic violence affects children

The diagrams below, which are Duluth Power and Control Wheels, show the different ways that children are affected by violence, as well as the ways that they can be supported and nurtured.



