

# Child Maltreatment Q&A

This page is meant to be printed and distributed to mandatory reporters, such as child care professionals.

**Q:** How do I know if a child is being abused?

**A:** Below are some common indicators of maltreatment:

## Physical abuse and neglect

### Physical indicators

- Bruises, particularly on back, buttocks, groin, thighs, calves and center of face
- Fractures in a child younger than 2, or multiple fractures at different stages of healing
- Burns, including caustic burns, burns from hot liquid, and burns that show a pattern
- Lacerations and welts, as from rope burns or whipping
- Persistently unattended medical problems
- Extreme uncleanliness

### Behavioral indicators

- Habitual fatigue
- Extreme fear of punishment
- Severe withdrawal or aggression
- Continual hunger
- Wary of physical contact with adults
- Reports of abuse
- Gives inconsistent or unbelievable explanations for injuries

## Sexual abuse

### Physical indicators

- Bruised or swollen genitals
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Rectal bleeding
- Blood in urine

### Behavioral indicators

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Sleep problems
- Self-destructive behavior
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme withdrawal or aggression
- Wary of contact with adults
- Creates artwork depicting sexual themes
- Shows inappropriate seductiveness
- Reports having sexual contact
- Reports having to keep secret an activity with an adult or older child
- Reports fear of being left alone with an adult or older child

## Emotional abuse and neglect

### Behavioral indicators

- Self-abusive behavior
- Severe withdrawal or aggression
- Extreme submissiveness and compliance, socially unresponsive
- Rocking and thumb sucking
- Does not play
- Describes self in negative terms

**Q:** Do I have to report suspected maltreatment?

**A:** Yes.

In all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, child care providers and educators are required by law to report suspected cases of child maltreatment.

**Q:** Can I make an anonymous report?

**A:** Laws vary by state.

Laws in 18 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoa and the Virgin Islands require mandatory reporters to provide their name and contact information. **Even if you are not required to give your name and information, investigators find it very helpful to know the reporter's identity.**

**Q:** Will my name be disclosed to the suspected abuser?

**A:** Again, laws vary by state.

In most states and territories, laws specifically protect the identity of the reporter from disclosure to the alleged perpetrator.

**Q:** Where can I find out about the laws in my state?

**A:** Go to [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

The Child Welfare Information Gateway, operated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families features an easy-to-use State Statutes Search and a wealth of helpful information about child maltreatment and other child welfare topics.



Created by the Southern Early Childhood Association.  
[www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org)