

# What is abuse?



Child abuse is when a child has been intentionally hurt, or when a parent or caregiver fails to protect a child in their care and the child is harmed as a result.

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse is any action that results or could result in an injury to a child or youth. It can include slapping, punching, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. Physical abuse can be one or two isolated incidents or occur over a prolonged period of time.

**Sexual Abuse :** Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. It is against the law to touch a child for sexual purpose; encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way; encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity; tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult's or older child's sexual purposes. Sexual abuse of children can take many forms. This includes sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private areas, fondling for sexual purposes, allowing a child to look at, or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation.

**Emotional Abuse :** Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour that undermines a child's emotional development and sense of self worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolating the child. It also includes failure by a parent or caregiver to provide their children with love, emotional support and guidance.

**Neglect :** Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. This can occur when parents do not know about appropriate care for children, when they cannot adequately supervise their children or when they are unable to plan ahead. Young children should never be left unattended. This includes leaving a child alone in a car even if you lock the doors and are gone for only a few minutes.

**Reasonable Discipline:** The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa does not support the use of physical punishment. Research has shown that positive behaviour management strategies are more effective than physical punishment.

These practices include:

- ♦ positive reinforcement;
- ♦ praise;
- ♦ modelling;
- ♦ redirection;
- ♦ structure and routine;
- ♦ setting realistic, age-appropriate expectations;
- ♦ verbal and non-verbal cues;
- ♦ logical consequences, and
- ♦ problem-solving.