

CHILD ABUSE RECOGNITION AND REPORTING

1. Definition: Child abuse is the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare. The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.
2. Purpose: Assessment of child abuse case based upon the following principles:
 - 2.1. **Protect** the life of the child from harm, as well as the EMS team from liability.
 - 2.2. **Suspect** that the child may be a victim of abuse, especially if the illness/injury is not consistent with the reported history.
 - 2.3. **Respect** the privacy of the child and family.
 - 2.4. **Collect** as much evidence as possible, especially information.
3. Procedure:
 - 3.1. With all children, assess for and document psychological characteristics of abuse, including excessive passivity, compliant or fearful behavior, excessive aggression, violent tendencies, excessive crying, fussy behavior, hyperactivity, or other behavior disorders.
 - 3.2. With all children, assess for and document physical signs of abuse, including especially and injuries that are inconsistent with the reported mechanism of injury. The back, buttocks, genitals, and face are common sites for abusive injuries.
 - 3.3. With all children, assess for and document signs and symptoms of neglect, including inappropriate level clothing for weather, inadequate hygiene, absence of attentive caregiver(s), or physical signs of malnutrition.
 - 3.4. With all children, assess for and document signs of sexual abuse, including torn, stained or bloody under clothing, unexplained injuries, pregnancy, or sexually transmitted diseases.
4. Reporting:
 - 4.1. Immediately report any suspicious findings to the receiving hospital (if transported) and/or Medical Control. EMS should not accuse or challenge the suspected abuser. This is a legal requirement to report, not an accusation.
 - 4.2. If you suspect a child is being neglected and/or abused, you must report your suspicions to the Department of Children and Family Services Child Protective Hotline at 1-855-452-5437 (24 hours a day).
 - 4.2.1. Complete a Department of Children and Family Services/Child Welfare Written Report Form for Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect within 5 days of making the initial oral report. Forms can be downloaded from www.dcfs.la.gov.