Child Abuse

What every nurse needs to know
Child abuse includes exposure to any type of abuse and/or neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or anyone a child is in the care of.

The 4 most common types of abuse:
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

(CDC, 2018)
Physical Abuse

- Involves the use of force including but not limited to:
  - Biting
  - Kicking
  - Hitting
  - Pushing
  - Burning
  - Shaking

(CDC, 2018)
Sexual Abuse

- Involving a child in sexual acts such as:
  - Fondling
  - Rape
  - Exposing a child to sexual activities

(CDC, 2018)
Emotional Abuse

- Behavior that may harm a child’s self-worth or emotional well-being such as:
  - Name calling
  - Withholding love
  - Threatening
  - Shaming
  - Rejection

(CDC, 2018)
Neglect

Failure to provide a child with basic needs such as:

- Housing
- Food
- Water
- Clothing
- Education
- Access to medical care

(CDC, 2018)
Data and Statistics

- Many cases are never reported.

- In 2016:
  - 1,750 children in the US died from abuse or neglect
  - Child Protective Services (CPS) found 676,000 children that were victims of abuse or neglect
  - 1 in 4 children are subject to abuse in their lifetime; while 1 in 7 children experienced abuse last year.
  - Cost of abuse/neglect economically is estimated at $124 billion annually (CDC, 2018)
Risk Factors for Children

- Children < 4 years are at greatest risk
- Special needs with caregiver burdens
  - Disabilities
  - Mental health issues
  - Long term physical illness

(CDC, 2018)
Risk Factors of abusers

- Parent’s own history of being abused
- Substance abuse and mental illness
- Poor understanding of child’s needs and expected stages of development
- Non-biological caregiver in home (typically mother’s male partner)

(CDC, 2018)
The Essentials for Childhood Framework (CDC, 2014) outlines how to create a safe, nurturing, positive and encouraging environment to prevent abuse and neglect.

Recognizing signs in the child

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Lacks adult supervision
- Learning problems that are not physical or psychologically based
- Overly passive, compliant, or withdrawn
- Watchful of everything, and fearful around adults
- Does not want to go home
- Does not receive help for medical conditions brought to parents attention.

(HHS, 2013)
Signs in the adult

- Blames child, for child’s problems at home or school
- Little concern for child
- Views child as worthless, burdensome, or bad
- High expectations the child cannot reach
- Instructs teachers to give harsh physical discipline of any misbehaving

(HHS, 2013)
Signs in parent and child interactions

- Rarely touch or look at each other in an appropriate manner
- View their relationship negatively
- Verbalize a dislike for each other.

(HHS, 2013)
Registered Nurses (RN) must report known, reasonably suspect, or observed instances of abuse to appropriate authorities.

Applies to situations that occur in the RN’s professional capacity or within the scope of employment.

Failure to report is considered unprofessional conduct and can result in disciplinary actions against the RNs license.

(State of CA Department of Consumer Affairs, 2010)
What the law requires

- Report of injuries Penal Code 11165.2:
  - Report by telephone **immediately**, or as soon as practically possible, along with a written report
  - Completed forms shall be sent to local law enforcement agency within **two** working days of receiving the information regarding the person.

(State of CA Department of Consumer Affairs, 2010)
Child Abuse Reporting Phone Numbers

- **Los Angeles County (CA):** 800-540-4000 (In-State) 213-639-4500 (Out of State)
- **Orange County (CA):** 714-940-1000 800-207-4464
- **San Bernardino County (CA):** 800-827-8724

(California Department of Social Services, 2019)
References


