

Behind The Badge:

Child Abuse Prevention Month
From Chief Scott McElroy of the Evansville Police Department

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and encourage individuals and communities to support children and families.

The Evansville Police Department is committed to this effort. We work regularly with Rock County Human Services and the Child Protective Services Unit (CPS) in investigating all Child abuse and neglect allegations.

Child abuse and neglect is a problem in our society, a problem that we can work to eliminate through awareness and action. One abused child is too many. Prevention and effective enforcement require that we also make a difference as individual citizens by immediately reporting to the appropriate authorities suspicions of child abuse and child neglect.

During periods of economic challenges, families may be much more vulnerable to child abuse and neglect. It is important now more than ever, that we all work together to eliminate child abuse and neglect. Every child deserves parents who are caring and protecting. If we all work together to recognize and identify potential child abuse and neglect, we can and will make a difference.

We have listed several indicators or signs of potential child abuse or neglect within this article. I encourage all readers to thoroughly examine the information this article provides and visit the valuable web sources listed. If you have reason to suspect there is child abuse or neglect happening, please notify the Evansville Police Department at 882-2299 or the Rock County Child Protective Services Unit at 757-5200.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms Factsheet

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, but a closer look at the situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

If you do suspect a child is being harmed, *reporting* your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family. Any concerned person can report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. Some people (typically certain types of professionals) are required by law to make a report of child maltreatment under specific circumstances- these are called mandatory reporters.

Professionals Required to Report

Approximately 48 States designate professions whose members are mandated by law to report child maltreatment. Individuals designated as mandatory reporters typically have frequent contact with children. Such individuals may include: Social workers, Teachers and other school personnel, Physicians and other health-care workers, Mental health professionals, Childcare providers, Medical examiners or coroners, Law enforcement officers, substance abuse counselors, domestic violence workers, members of the Clergy, and probation or parole officers.

For more information about where and how to file a report, contact the Evansville Police Department at 882-2299 or the Rock County Child Protective Services unit at 757-5200. An additional resource for information and referral is the Childhelp® National Child Abuse Hotline (800.4.A.CHILD).

Recognizing Child Abuse

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home

The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child
- Denies the existence of- or blames the child for- the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs

The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship entirely negative

State that they do not like each other

Types of Abuse

The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected. For a more extensive list, you can call the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-4-A-CHILD[®] (1-800-422-4453).

Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
- Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Resources used for this information:

Author(s): Child Welfare Information Gateway

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<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/>

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www.childhelp.org

Resources on the Child Welfare Information Gateway Website:

Child Abuse and Neglect
www.childwelfare.gov/can/

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect
www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining/

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect
www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
www.childwelfare.gov/responding/reporting.cfm

http://www.michigan.gov/gov/0,1607,7-168-23442_25488-185656--,00.html

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About/News/2008/2008-04-01_child_abuse_proclamation.asp

<http://www.gov.state.ak.us/archive.php?id=963&type=6>