

# Child abuse is everyone's problem



It's hard to accept that children – who can't defend or care for themselves — are mistreated, often by those they most trust. Yet it's true. Read on to learn more about child abuse and find out how to become a helper and advocate.

## What is child abuse?<sup>1</sup>

Child abuse is any act by a parent or caregiver that hurts a child. And this can include the failure to protect a child from harm. Child abuse includes:

- Actions causing serious physical or emotional harm
- Molestation and other sexual abuse
- Exploitation of a child
- Decisions that put a child at imminent risk
- Acts resulting in a child's death

According to the American Society for the Positive Care of Children, neglect is the number one form of abuse in our country.

## There are different types of child abuse

Here are the most common<sup>1</sup>:

- **Physical abuse:** Hitting, very cruel punishment or actions causing injury
- **Neglect:** Failure to meet a child's basic needs or causing malnutrition
- **Emotional abuse:** Causing psychological or emotional instability
- **Verbal abuse:** Yelling, screaming, belittling, bullying or cursing
- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual assault, showing a child pornography, creating child pornography or using a child for sexual pleasure
- **Failure to protect:** Willfully harming or putting a child in danger, including leaving a child in a hot car
- **Shaken baby syndrome:** Shaking that causes death or permanent brain damage
- **Domestic violence:** Exposing a child to a violent home or family
- **Substance abuse:** Exposing a child to a parent or caregiver's personal drug and alcohol abuse
- **Abandonment:** Leaving a child without care and support

That's a hard list to read. Yet, it's critical to know that child abuse exists, takes many forms and is common. If someone you know may be harming a child, remember there is help for both adults and children.

<sup>1</sup>[What is Child Abuse?](#) American Society for the Positive Care of Children. Accessed January 2018.

## What can you do to help?

If you want to be part of the solution, start with awareness. After that, be watchful and brave. If you see or sense something “off” with a child or situation, go with your gut and speak up. Ask questions. Or call the Child Protective Services or police in your area.

## Need more information?

Learn more about child abuse and what you can do by getting in touch with the National Child Abuse Hotline. Call **1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)** or visit them online at [childhelp.org](http://childhelp.org).<sup>2</sup> By contacting this group, you can report abuse, find your local children’s services, donate to the cause and more.

As the saying goes: “See something, say something.”



<sup>2</sup>[The Issue of Child Abuse](#). Childhelp. Accessed January 2018.

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