Child Abuse Response & Evaluation Services

Abuse Hotline: 1-800-478-4444
If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call this number! A child’s safety may depend on you.

Signs and Symptoms That a Child May Be Experiencing Sexual Abuse

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

- Sudden fear of a particular place or person
- Extreme mood swings, unexplained depressions and excessive crying
- Moodiness and withdrawal from normal family activity and affection – or the opposite, extreme clinginess to a “safe” family member and extreme fearfulness when separated from that person
- Sudden changes in personality
- Behavior and other problems in school (grades dropping, etc.)
- Running away from home
- Secretiveness
- Telling lies
- Suddenly has money from unexplained source
- Self-destructive behavior
- Hyperactivity
- Fear of the dark and fear of going to bed (new demands for a night light)
- Problems with sleep – can’t sleep, nightmares, bedwetting, sleepwalking, etc.
- Changes in eating habits
- Unexplained stomach upsets and aches
- Difficulty at bath time
- Changes in bathroom or toilet-training habits
- Regressive behavior such as thumb sucking or signs of dependency that were earlier outgrown
- Pain, itching, redness, soreness, unusual discharge from genital area
- Difficulty in walking (limping) or sitting
- Bruises, rashes, cuts, and other hurts that child cannot or seems unwilling to explain
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear
- Inappropriate displays of affection and sexual “acting out”
- Use of sexual terminology not normal to age level of peers
- New names for body parts
- Unusual interest in sexual matters
- Sudden acting out—aggressive or rebellious behavior – against siblings or other family members, with friends, violent play with dolls and other toys, hurting animals