SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE

The first step in helping abused children is learning to recognize the symptoms of child abuse. Although child abuse is divided into four types — physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment — the types are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally maltreated as well, and a sexually abused child may be also neglected. Any child at any age may experience any type of child abuse. Children over age five are more likely to be physically abused and to suffer moderate injury than are children under age five.

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 from school
- 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 from classmates
- 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 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
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Runs away

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

- Is unduly protective of the child, severely limits the child's contact with other children--especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Describes marital difficulties involving family power struggles or sexual relations

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 school problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Source: www.preventchildabuseutah.org/recognizingabuse_parents.html