



CHILD ABUSE:

- Child abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere.
- Both males and females abuse children.
- Statistics show 1 out of 6 males are abused in the State of WI before the age of 18.
- Statistics show 1 out of 4 females are abused in the State of WI before the age of 18.
- 89% of abuse comes from someone the victim knows and loves or thinks they know.
- Both males and females abuse children.
- Child abuse is frequently more than a one-time event.
- Rarely is child abuse witnessed by another adult.
- Prevention of child abuse begins when informed, caring adults are familiar with possible warning signs of abuse.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE:

Please consider that the following can be warning signs of abuse (sexual, physical) and/or neglect. It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. The existence of a warning sign (or set of signs) does not definitively indicate a child is being abused. However, the appearance of even a single warning sign should cause responsible and caring adults to look more closely for additional indicators that a child may be in danger.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS, IN GENERAL:

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- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Sudden aggressiveness or hostility.
- Deteriorating peer relationships.
- Withdrawal or isolation from others
- Comes to school or other activities/events early, stays late, and does not want to go home.
- Abuses alcohol or drugs.
- Engages in suicidal talk or a suicide attempt.
- Runs away.

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.
- 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.
- Report that they do not like each other.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE:

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.
- Looks to the parent consistently for approval before doing anything.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Consistently declines events involving sleep-overs or swimming.

The Parent:

- 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.
- Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

The Child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- Reports recurrent nightmares or has a fear of the dark.
- Sudden regressive behaviors – i.e. bedwetting, thumb sucking.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Excessive or lack of bathing.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Deliberate physical abuse (cutting, scratching etc.) to one's self.
- Have inappropriate sexual apps on their cellphone or talk about inappropriate social media sites.

The Parent:

- 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.

POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS OF NEGLECT:

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 strong body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Consistently reports a parent is working.

The Parent:

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

There is some very helpful information from the *VIRTUS* "Protecting God's Children" Adult Awareness Program and the *VIRTUS* website (www.virtus.org) that can assist you.