

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is any act of omission or commission that endangers a child's physical or emotional health and development. It is the act rather than the degree or injury that determines intervention. Mandated reporting requires only a suspicion, **not** proof.

Both law enforcement agencies and the Orange County Child Abuse Registry (CAR) may take reports from the community and mandated reporters. Call the law enforcement jurisdiction where the event happened or CAR (714-940-1000). CAR is available for consultation 24 hours a day.

For immediate protection of a child, call your local law enforcement agency.

Assessment for Abuse and/or Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Explanation/history does not fit the injury
- Delay in seeking medical care
- Prior unexplained injuries/ingestions
- High risk: children younger than six, chronic disease, special needs

Behavioral Indicators

- Extremes in behavior: withdrawn/apathy, depression, or overly compliant
- Frightened of caregiver or going home
- Antisocial, self destructive, or suicidal
- Sleep, eating, or speech disorders
- Pseudomaturity, sexual knowledge beyond expected for age, or compulsive masturbation



Violence Prevention Coalition of Orange County
&
American Academy of Pediatrics

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Caregiver Indicators

- Inappropriate interactions with child
- Poor perception of child's condition
- Unrealistic expectations of child's behavior
- Stress: marital/family difficulties, unstable housing, inadequate income, domestic violence, substance abuse, or depression/mental health problems

Communication Considerations

- Interview child separately with non judgmental attitude, avoiding promises of future events
- Never ask child "why" (suggests fault)
- Clarify words/statements without suggesting answers
- Document in quotes using questions, responses, and spontaneous statements

Medical Considerations

- Write description of physical findings with avoidance of precise dating or non-forensic photography
- Non-emergency incidents should be reported before an examination. Child may be taken to a center of law enforcement's choosing, avoiding multiple exams.
- With no disclosure from child, consider common non-abusive etiologies: dermatologic conditions, infections, hematologic disorders, and unintentional injuries.

Mandated Reporting

- Telephone immediately any suspicion of child abuse: **Orange County CAR (714-940-1000 or 1-800-207-4464)** or law enforcement agency.
- Complete and mail SS 8572 form for within 36 hours (form available at <http://www.ocgov.com/ssa>)
- Health care examiners must document injuries on forms DOJ 900 (physical abuse) or OCJP925 (sexual abuse)
- Be sure to follow your facility's procedures for reporting.

www.vpcoc.org

6/2004

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