



Child Protection

A Guide for Parents.

July 2022



It can be difficult to spot the signs of child abuse or know what to do.

Whilst this is very rare, Busy Bees has information and advice on different types of child abuse, how to spot the signs and what you can do to help keep children safe. We also have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in all of our Busy Bees Services and a Company Safeguarding Lead who can support and advise you.

The content in this guide may be confronting, so please reach out to your Service Manager for support or contact the Bravehearts Support Line on 1800 272 831.



Contents.

Spotting the Signs	3
Effects of Child Abuse	4
Types, Signs & Symptoms of Abuse.....	6
Keeping your Child Safe	10
Values, Vision & Mission.....	12

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Spotting the Signs

The signs of child abuse can be hard to spot. Busy Bees can help you to recognise the signs of abuse and support you if you have concerns about a child.

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening to them is abuse.

There are different types of child abuse and the signs that a child is being abused may depend on the type. For example, the signs that a child is being neglected may be different from the signs that a child is being abused sexually.

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- Becoming withdrawn
- Seeming anxious
- Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- Lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- Poor bond or relationship with a parent
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- Acting out sexual behaviour in their play
- Running away or going missing
- Always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body
- Extreme tiredness
- Visible signs of neglect, dirty, hungry etc.

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour – but sharing your concerns will help you to assess the situation. You may also notice some concerning behaviour from adults who you know have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child / children's safety and well-being.

Effects of Child Abuse

If we work together to stop abuse happening and provide support to children who have been abused, we can turn things around for a child at any stage of their development – so they can go on to lead a happy and fulfilling life.

Child abuse can take many forms. It can be emotional, physical, sexual or neglect. And it can happen to any child, in any family, in any place or online.

Abuse often happens over a period of time, rather than as a one-off event, and can have a devastating effect on a child's development and society as a whole.

Some of the effects child abuse can have include:

- Negative effects on a child's health, relationships and education
- Adults who were abused as children may find it harder to cope with life's stresses, get a good job, or be a good parent
- Mental health problems, drug or alcohol issues, criminal behaviour – or showing signs of harmful behaviour themselves.

We can all play our part in preventing abuse. And we can all help a child who's experienced abuse, to get their life back on track.





Types, Signs & Symptoms of Abuse

Physical Abuse

Children may often experience minor injuries during day to day activities, however please speak to your DSL if:

- A child often has injuries, and / or those injuries aren't where you would typically expect them
- There is a pattern of injuries on certain days or particular times of the week / month / year.

Possible signs of Physical Abuse:

- **Bruising** - in unusual areas e.g. stomach, back, buttocks; clusters of bruises, shaped bruising
- **Burns / scalds** - clear edge to burn / scald, multiple or shaped burns, in unusual areas e.g. back, shoulders, buttocks
- **Bite marks** - visible indentations from teeth, large size of bite mark
- **Fractures / broken bones** - multiple or at different stages of healing, in usual places e.g. ribs, legs (in immobile babies)
- **Other injuries and health problems** - scars, effects of poisoning e.g. vomiting, drowsiness, seizures, respiratory problems from drowning
- **Specific to babies and young children** - appearing limp, respiratory issues, seizures, vomiting, unusual responses e.g. irritable, poor feeding, lethargic, unresponsive



Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may be passive when a parent or carer does not provide the necessary level of love, support and interaction that a child needs, or active abuse when a parent or carer deliberately and premeditatedly causes emotional harm to a child. It can involve any of the following:

- Humiliating, criticising, jokes or sarcasm
- Shouting at, threatening or calling names
- Blaming or scapegoating
- Making a child perform degrading acts
- Pushing a child too hard or not recognising limitations
- Exposing to domestic abuse or drug taking
- Failing to promote a child's social development
- Persistently ignoring them
- Being absent
- Never showing any emotions in interactions with a child.

Possible signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Over-affectionate to strangers / people they don't know
- Lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- Not appear to have a close relationship with their parent
- Be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals
- Withdrawn, clingy, anxious or sudden behaviour changes
- Becoming aggressive
- Problems sleeping
- Eating disorders
- Soiling of clothes
- Obsessive behaviour.

Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and is the most common form of child abuse.

Basic Needs can be categorised into four main areas:

1. **Physical Neglect** - where a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter or supervision to ensure their safety is not met
2. **Educational Neglect** - where a child's parent does not ensure that they receive a suitable education
3. **Emotional Neglect** - where a child's needs for love, care and attention is not met. This can also translate into the definition of emotional abuse as above
4. **Medical Neglect** - where a child is not taken to the doctor or dentist, or medical advice is ignored.

Possible signs of Neglect:

- **Poor Appearance and Hygiene** - be smelly or dirty, unwashed clothes, unsuitable or inadequate clothing, appear hungry, frequent and untreated nappy rash
- **Health and Development Problems** - untreated injuries, medical or dental issues, repeated accidental injuries, recurring illnesses / infections, not given appropriate medicines or missed appointments, skin sores / rashes / flea bites / scabies / ringworm, thin or swollen tummy, tiredness, not reaching developmental milestones
- **Housing and Family Issues** - unsuitable home environment e.g. no heating, animal mess; left alone for a long time, taking on the role of a carer.



Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the Internet).

Possible signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Stay away from certain people
- Avoid being alone with people
- Appear frightened to socialise with others especially adults
- Show sexual behaviour which is inappropriate for their age
- Use sexual language or know information that you would not expect them to
- Sore genitals and / or anus
- Unusual discharge
- Copy what's happening to them in role play situations.

Keeping your Child Safe

- If your child is attending a service, sports club or other activity, ask about Working with Child Checks and their safeguarding procedures.
- It's a good idea to keep talking to your child about their service or school, or time spent at a friend's house, even if nothing seems wrong. Ask them about their day - but try not to badger them. It's important that if anything happens, they feel like they can talk to you about it.
- As children grow up and start going to school, it's also important to talk to them about their safety and what to look out for. It is a tricky conversation to have but Bravehearts has [resources](#) to help. bravehearts.org.au

Don't wait until you're certain: if you have any concerns or suspicions, these need to be reported. If you feel a child is in immediate danger, call the police straight away on 000.

There are a number of ways you can report a concern, any of these options will enable someone to protect a child from potential further harm or neglect:

- Speak to the Service Manager at the Service or Head of the school
- Look on your local authority website
- Report suspicion to jurisdictional authority

What happens if I share my concerns? There are lots of reasons why you might want to remain anonymous when telling someone your concerns. You don't have to tell people who you are, where you live or share your contact details. If you do choose to share any of your details, you can state you do not want to share them with other agencies - like the police or social services. When there's a serious concern about a child, and if you've shared information about the child's identity, the person you have shared your concerns with will take the next steps. This is called "making a referral". They will make a report and share information with social services. They might also contact local police if the child is in immediate danger. If they don't need to make a referral, they'll give you advice on what you can do or information on local services

Websites

Australian Capital Territory - Community Services

New South Wales - Department of Communities and Justice

New South Wales - Office of the Children's Guardian

Northern Territory - Territory Families

Queensland - Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

South Australia - Department for Child Protection

Tasmania - Children and Youth Services

Victoria - Department of Health and Human Services

Western Australia - Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support



Values, Vision & Mission

Our Values

Care

We take care of children entrusted to us and our dedicated staff. All are appreciated and diversity valued.

Quality

We maintain the highest standards in care and safety and provide exceptional early years education.

Service

We provide exceptional service and are integral to supporting parents bringing up children.

Value

We provide outstanding value for our families.



Our Vision

To give every child the best start in life

Our Mission

Deliver high-quality childcare and exciting opportunities for learning that give every child a head start as they prepare for school



**Busy Bees is Committed to
Supporting Child Safety and has a
Strong Partnership with
Bravehearts to help Educate,
Empower and Protect the Children
in our Care.**





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