

- If you suspect of any child abuse and/or neglect, you will immediately report this to the director and to child care authorities.
- This includes talking to the director if you have a gut feelings that something isn't right.
- Abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
- Abuse includes screaming or yelling at a child or pulling or grabbing them in anger on any body part including the hands and arms.
- Caregivers are mandated by law to report abuse and neglect.

## **Do you know how to recognize the signs of daycare abuse?**

When you leave your child at a daycare center, the last thing you want is for them to be abused or taken advantage of. As a parent, you trust that childcare workers are properly vetted (background-checked), well-trained, and have the integrity to do the right thing when it comes to the safety and well-being of an infant or young child. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

It's of utmost importance that you pay close attention to your child at all times, and look for the tell-tale signs of child abuse—especially if your instincts tell you something is off.

Many child abusers fly under the radar until it is far too late, and daycare workers accused of abuse often face minimal repercussions. Our law firm believes that child abusers should be held fully accountable, both criminally and civilly, in order to help ensure that similar instances of abuse never occur again in the future. We firmly believe that abusive day care centers need to be shut down, and those who abuse children should face severe consequences for their actions.

## Signs of physical child abuse.

Child physical abuse may be subtle or apparent. That being said, it usually manifests itself in unusual marks, scratches or bumps that never seem to heal. If your child has three or more injuries that are in various stages of healing, this may signal ongoing abuse that needs investigation. Cuts, sores and bruises on their faces and arms can also be red flags, as well as bite marks and burns. In addition, look out for tufts of missing hair on their head since this may indicate hair pulling as a form of abuse, and keep a close eye on injuries that may have left an imprint such as a belt, buckle, or hand print.

Child abuse is not always overt, but there are certain behavioral clues that may help you recognize physical abuse:

- Night terrors and nightmares
- Runaway attempts (especially from the daycare center)
- Apprehension when being taken to/ dropped off at daycare
- Aggressive or rude behavior that appears all of a sudden
- Poor concentration or memory
- Flinching as a reaction to sudden movements
- A dazed look
- Being eager to please
- Frequent crying

The existence of one or more of these behavioral signs may point to abuse, but it is also important not to jump to conclusions too early on. If your child is old enough to communicate verbally, ask questions such as *“Did anything happened at daycare today that you didn’t like?”* or *“Are any of your teachers mean to you?”* By getting in the habit of discussing their day, they are more-likely to report instances of abuse or neglect.

## Signs of sexual child abuse.

Child sexual abuse is one of the most horrific injustices a child can face, and the emotional toll can end up causing major life issues for your child well into adulthood.

There are often no physical signs of sexual abuse, and children can be apprehensive about “taddling” on the abuser (often due to threats of trouble or violence for telling anybody). It is vital to assure your child that they will not get in trouble for telling on their daycare teachers (or anyone) for doing something that makes them uncomfortable or scared.

Common signs of child sexual abuse:

- Precocious behavior or adult language that’s not in line with a child’s age.
- Seeking out affection in an inappropriate manner.
- Scratching, pain, or soreness of the child’s genital area.
- Trouble walking or sitting.
- Frequently coming home with gifts and toys from the center.
- Constant talking about a new older friend.
- Starting to view their body as being filthy or repulsive.
- Nightmares involving stressful sexual situations.
- Blood-stained and/or torn undergarments.
- Contraction of an STD.

## Signs of emotional child abuse.

Since there are no physical signs of emotional child abuse, parents must be vigilant. Pay attention to behavioral changes and try to have them open up about anyone (especially adults) who say mean things to them, yell, or make them feel bad/scared. Some of the more-common instances we've seen are name-calling, belittling insults, threats of violence, striking objects near the child, pretending they're about to strike the child, and even intentionally ignoring the child.

Be on the lookout for things such as:

- Strong changes in behavior (sudden aggression, depression, neediness/clinginess, withdrawal).
- Lack of confidence or talking bad about themselves ("I'm stupid," "I'm an idiot," etc).
- Sudden changes in speech, such as stuttering or talking much less.
- Aggression toward other children or animals.
- Infantile regression (rocking back and forth, head banging, thumb sucking).
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping.

## Signs of child neglect.

One of the most-common types of abuse is child neglect—a pattern of failing to provide care or adequate needs to a child. This can include failing to provide adult supervision, basic hygiene (diaper changes, bathroom breaks), water, first aid, and more.

Some of the more-common signs of child neglect are:

- Extreme thirst / the need to go to the bathroom when picked up from daycare.
- Untreated cuts, scrapes, or injuries.
- Frequent injuries caused by other children.
- Diaper rashes.

Daycare neglect often goes undetected, which is why we recommend making unannounced visits to the daycare center if you suspect anything. Alternatively, find a daycare with live video feeds so that you can check in remotely throughout the day.

## Signs of a bad daycare worker.

Since you simply cannot discern whether a caregiver or daycare worker is "good" or "bad" based on appearance, it's always a good idea to key in on behavioral cues which may highlight signs of a bad caregiver.

Here are a few warning signs:

- Your child talks often about how scared they are of a particular daycare worker. They may even seem quiet and withdrawn around this person.
- The caregiver seems to always have an excuse as to why things aren't running as they should. If you prod, they may appear to be defensive or have a temper.
- When you do visit, you notice a caregiver is always on the computer or smartphone.
- Your child frequently comes home with soiled clothes.
- The caregiver has a bad attitude, is short-tempered, or appears generally unhappy while at work.