



Fact Sheet 3

February 2007

Risk factors and indicators of child harm/abuse*

This fact sheet contains information that may assist in the formation of a reasonable suspicion of harm and neglect of children/young people.

General indicators in children/young people may include:

- Child/young person indicates that they have been harmed
- Parent's and/or child's history of injury is inconsistent with presentation and child's developmental stage
- reporting by another person that the child may be being harmed
- behavioural signs eg. depression, aggression, and/or hyperactivity.

Child/young person's stress may be observable by:

- poor concentration at school
- marked changes in mood
- sleeping/bedtime problems eg. bedwetting, nightmares
- marked changes in behaviour or mood, tantrums, aggressiveness, withdrawal
- psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches

Risk factors and indicators in parents or carers:

The following factors in the life circumstances of the child or young person are also relevant when considering indicators of harm/abuse and neglect:

- history of previous harm to the child or young person
- history of previous harm to the parent/carer as a child
- social or geographic isolation of the child, young person or family

including lack of access to extended family or supports

- cultural and language backgrounds
- family/carer financial stress
- harm/abuse or neglect of a sibling
- family history of violence including injury to parent/carer and/or children and young people
- physical or mental health issues for the parent/carer affecting their ability to care for the child or young person
- the parent's/carer's abuse of alcohol or other drugs affecting their ability to care for the child or young person
- parenting skills which are insufficient to provide for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person
- the parent/carer experiencing significant problems in managing the child/young person's behaviour
- the parent/carer has unrealistic expectations of age-appropriate behaviour in the child or young person
- the parent or carer experiencing significant problems in relating to the child or young person.

(*This framework is a guide for practice and is not considered to be comprehensive of all harm, behaviours or presentations that may give rise to concern or suspicion of abuse/harm or neglect. Each indicator needs to be considered in the context of the child/young person's circumstances. Further harm/abuse and neglect can occur in the absence of a demonstrable 'risk factor'.)

Further information

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