



Fact Sheet 11 May, 2007

Risk factors and indicators for harm in 13-18 years*

This fact sheet contains information that may assist in the formation of a reasonable suspicion of child abuse/harm and neglect

Developmental issues:

- Increasing sense of self-defining identity, sexuality, peer groups, relationships, changing family dynamics
- Young person is vulnerable because of testing boundaries/rebellion against authority
- Significant relationship issues/changes between parent and child/family/peers
- Risk that older children may be viewed as less vulnerable group

Risk factors in children 13-18 years may include:

- Exposure to multiple forms of child abuse and neglect
- Exposure to non-familial child abuse and neglect
- Exposure to community violence
- Repeat accidents and injuries
- Learning difficulties
- Low self-esteem
- Insecure family attachment
- Impulsivity
- Hyperactivity/disruptive behaviour
- Inadequate behaviour management
- Difficult temperament

Risk factors in the family may include:

- Mental health problems
- Marital conflict associated with instability
- Exposure to family violence
- Deprivation (social and environmental)
- Criminality
- Parental substance abuse
- Parent with disability

Physical harm/abuse:

- Physical signs may be attributed to sports injuries

Sexual abuse:

- Presence of a sexually transmissible infection, (NB: may be a possibility of consensual sex between young people, need to establish age of the sexual partner)
- Risk behaviours eg promiscuity, drug abuse
- Trauma or bruising to the genital areas, thighs, buttocks, lower abdomen

Emotional abuse:

- Behaviour problems/school alienation
- Presence of bullying and child to child violence in the family
- Combative scenarios between the parent and child
- Chronic somatic complaints by child eg 'upset stomach'
- Low social skills and problem solving/poor peer relationship building
- Extreme withdrawal
- Anxiety/depression

(*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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