



Indicators of child abuse

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It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused.

Some indicators of child abuse are:

- bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- multiple bruising or injuries - for example, burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations or fractures
- injury left untreated
- differing versions of how an injury occurred
- child/relative advising of abuse
- a child, referring to someone else being abused, may mean him/herself
- sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- nightmares/bedwetting/going to bed fully-clothed
- a high level of distrust of other people
- an inability to relate well with adults and/or children
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour, disruptive or aggressive behaviour and bullying
- seeking indiscriminate or inappropriate adult affection.

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. People working with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense. If you feel any doubt contact your state or territory's child protection agency.

Search for more resources relating to "Child Abuse" in the Resources section