

## **Educators' Checklist for Recognizing Possible Child Maltreatment**

### **Neglect**

#### **Does the child:**

Come to school in soiled clothing or clothing that is significantly too small or large for them or often in need of repair?

Seem inadequately dressed for the weather?

Always seem to be hungry, hoarding, or stealing food, but coming to school with little of their own food?

Appear listless and tired with little energy due to no routine or structure around bedtimes?

Often report caring for younger siblings?

Demonstrate poor hygiene, smell of urine or feces, or have very bad breath or dirty or decaying teeth?

Seem emaciated or have a distended stomach indicative of malnutrition?

Have unattended medical or dental problems such as infected sores or badly decayed or abscessed teeth?

Exhibit stealing, vandalism, or other delinquent behaviors?

Have frequent school absences or tardiness?

Have poor peer relationships, possibly due to hygiene problems or a depressed or negative attitude?

Appear withdrawn?

Crave attention, even eliciting negative responses to gain it?

Demonstrate destructive or pugnacious behavior and show no apparent guilt over his or her acts?

Exhibit low self-esteem?

Have a conduct disorder diagnosis or act oppositionally defiant?

Have difficulty problem solving or coping?

Have difficulty with language comprehension and expression?

Have a variety of academic problems?

### **Physical Abuse**

#### **Does the child have:**

Extensive bruises, especially in areas of the body that are not normally vulnerable?  
Are the bruises of different colors indicating various stages of healing?

Frequent bruises around the head or face, the abdomen or midway between the wrist and elbow? Although bruises to the knees, legs, and elbows frequently occur in normal falls, the above areas are less likely to occur in falls and should be investigated.

Bruises in specific shapes such as handprints, hangar marks, or belt buckles?

Marks that indicate hard blows from an object such as an electrical cord or other whip-like object that make a burn around the body?

Bruises on multiple parts of the body indicating blows from different directions?

Unexplained abdominal bleeding (i.e., caused by internal bleeding) that might be observed as discoloration under the skin or blood-filled lumps?

Extreme sensitivity to pain or complaints of soreness and stiffness or awkward movements as if caused by pain?

Bald spots from severe hair pulling?

Adult-sized, human bite marks?

Burns, especially from objects such as cigarettes, irons, and other objects?

Injuries for which the explanation given is inadequate?

## **Emotional Abuse**

### **Does the child sometimes exhibit:**

Inappropriate affect such as turning negatives into jokes and laughing when in pain?

Extremes in behavior - manically happy or very depressed?

Withdrawal - no verbal or physical communication with others?

Self-destructive behavior (e.g., cutting oneself)?

General destructive behavior?

Difficulties with concentrating or learning new material or compulsive attention to detail?

Cruelty to others?

Vandalism, stealing, cheating?

Rocking, thumb sucking, head banging?

Enuresis (wetting one's pants) or soiling after an age when such behavior is inappropriate?

Substance abuse?

Eating disorders?

Physical manifestations such as frequent stomachaches or headaches or unexplained weight loss or gain?

Delinquent behavior?

## **Sexual Abuse**

### **Does the child:**

Have difficulty in walking or sitting?

Complain of genital or anal itching, pain, or bleeding?

Have frequent psychosomatic illnesses?

Frequently vomit without organic causes?

Become pregnant at a young age?

Have any sexually transmitted diseases?

### **Does the child exhibit:**

Exceptional secrecy?

More sexual knowledge than is age appropriate (especially in younger children)?

Indepth sexual play with peers (different from the normal "playing doctor" form of exploration)?

Extreme compliance or withdrawal?

Overt aggression?

An inordinate fear of males (or females)?

Extremely seductive behavior?

A drop in school performance or sudden nonparticipation in school activities?

Sleep problems or nightmares?

Crying without provocation?

A sudden onset of wetting or soiling of pants or bed?

Sudden phobic behavior?

Feelings of little self-worth or talk of being damaged?

A much older and more worldly appearance than peers?

Suicide attempts or ideas of wanting to kill self?

Excessive attempts to run away from home?

Cruelty to animals (especially those that would normally be pets)?

Setting fires and enjoying watching them burn?

An eating disorder?

Self-mutilation (cutting or scratching to draw blood)?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Crosson-Tower, C. (2002). How can we recognize child abuse and neglect? In *When children are abused: An educator's guide to intervention* (pp. 8-34). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. [back](#)