

Handout 2.4: Indicators of Neglect, Emotional Abuse and Sexual Abuse

Neglect

Some Signs of Neglect:

- Unkempt appearance
- Lack of medical or dental care
- Poor hygiene
- Abandonment
- Child unusually small for his/her age
- Child is very thin and always hungry
- Child is rifling through garbage for food

Some Behaviours of a Neglected Child:

- Begs for food
- Stealing
- Lack of interest
- Tired and listless
- Passive or aggressive
- Poor attendance at school
- Rocking
- Isolation
- Depression
- In infants, failure to thrive
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty learning
- Low self-esteem

Some Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Physical problems resulting from stress
- Poor performance at school
- Low self-esteem
- Low confidence
- Constantly putting self down

In boys

- Aggression
- Temper tantrums
- Fights with peers and siblings
- Bullying tactics
- Frustrates easily
- Disobedience
- Lying and cheating
- Destructive behaviours
- Impulsive behaviours
- Tease excessively
- Worry excessively
- Withdrawn

In girls

- Withdrawn
- Passive
- Approval-seeking
- Compliant
- Frustrates easily
- Infinite patience
- Clinging to adults
- Overly dependent
- Stubborn
- Tease excessively
- Worry excessively
- Somatic complaints

Sexual Abuse

Physical signs

- Physical trauma such as redness, rashes, and/or bleeding to oral, genital and/or anal areas
- Bruises on breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen, thighs, genital and/or rectal areas
- Complaints of pain or itching in genital or anal areas
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Unusual or offensive body odours
- Difficulty in bladder or bowel control
- Constipation
- Pain or discomfort on urination
- Blood in urine
- Abnormal dilation of vaginal or rectal openings
- Foreign bodies in vaginal, rectal or urethral openings
- Sexually transmitted diseases found vaginally, rectally or orally
- Yeast or bacterial infections
- Frequent sore throats; difficulty swallowing; choking
- Sudden weight gain or extreme weight loss
- Severe psychosomatic complaints such as stomach aches and headaches

Some Behaviours of a Sexually-abused Child

- Promiscuous sexual behaviours
- Resist physical contact
- Obsession with private parts
- Fearful
- Self-destructive
- Suicidal
- Withdrawal
- Depression