Child Abuse and Neglect

Module 1: Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect
Your Role in Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

It is important for you to learn about this subject. Child abuse and neglect occurs in all socio-economic families as well as in child care programs. It is more prevalent than you may think, and you may be the only person in a position to intervene. You have not only a moral obligation to intervene, but legal obligation to report it.

For more information about child abuse and neglect, you can call the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence at 1-800-500-1119 or the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence at 1-888-956-7273 to be connected to a local hotline.
Child Abuse and Neglect Quiz

1. Three children die of child abuse in the home in the United States each
   a) Year  b) Day  c) Week  d) Month
2. How many people report child abuse when faced with an actual situation?
   a) 3/4  b) 1/2  c) 1/3
3. What is the single, leading cause of death for children ages four and younger?
   a) Drowning  b) Motor vehicle accidents  c) Child abuse and neglect  d) Choking on food
   e) Residential fires  f) Suffocation  g) Falls
4. On average, child abuse is reported somewhere in the United States every
   a) 0 seconds  b) 20 minutes  c) Hour
5. Strangers pose the greatest risk of sexual abuse to children.
   a) True  b) False
6. Child molesters get their sexual gratification only from children.
   a) True  b) False
7. The average age that child molesters first attack a child is when they (the attackers) are:
   a) In their early 20s  b) Middle-aged  c) In their teens
8. Which of the following actions can help stop child abuse and neglect?
   a) Helping a stressed-out parent by baby-sitting, making a meal for their family or lending an
      understanding ear.
   b) Learning the signs and symptoms of child abuse so you can recognize them when you see
      the “red flags.”
   c) Reporting known or suspected child abuse to the police or local child protective services agency.
   d) All of the above.
Definitions

1. Child
2. Child Abuse
3. Emotional Neglect
4. Florida Abuse Hotline
5. Harm
6. Immunity
7. Inadequate supervision
8. Institutional Abuse or Neglect
9. Lack of adequate clothing/good hygiene
10. Lack of adequate nutrition
11. Lack of adequate shelter
12. Lack of dental/medical care
13. Lack of love and attention (Failure to thrive)
14. Lack of providing access to education
15. Mandatory Reporter
16. Neglect
17. Physical Abuse
18. Sexual Abuse
19. Verbal Abuse
Types of Child Abuse

This is an example of **physical** abuse:

For the 3rd time this week Kevin got mud all over his clothes while he was playing outside. This made Kevin’s mother Shelby mad. She thought that putting him in hot bath water would punish him for the dirty clothes. He cried about taking a bath and cried even more when he was put in the bathtub with scalding hot water. Shelby kept her hand on Kevin’s shoulder. Every time he tried to get out of the water, Shelby would push him down. Shelby didn’t notice the scald marks until after the bath was over.
Types of Child Abuse

Another type of child abuse is **sexual**: Casey has been at your facility for 3 years. He has been known to lie on several occasions. He comes from a family that has a wonderful reputation in the community. One day Casey is crying. When you ask him what is wrong he tells you that his dad made him take his clothes off and then he took a lot of pictures of him. Casey said Dad told him not to tell anyone about the pictures. He said Dad told him this was their special secret.
A third type of abuse is **emotional**.

Latoya is a quiet and shy child. Lately, she has been talking even less. One day she was in the housekeeping area when a cup was accidentally broken by one of the children. Latoya started crying. When you asked what was wrong, she told you it reminded her of when she broke her dad’s favorite cup one time. She said now her dad tells her every morning, when she is eating breakfast, that he doesn’t want her around any more because she is bad and is too much trouble. When you ask if Dad hurts her, she says no.
Key Point

There are three types of child abuse: physical, sexual and emotional.
Shaken Baby Syndrome

• What can shaking a baby or young child cause?
  *Permanent brain damage, paralysis, blindness, seizures, developmental delays, broken bones, death*

• What can you do to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome?
  *Make sure those who care for young children know the dangers of shaking a baby; be careful during play or physical activity.*

• How can you cope with a crying baby or child?
  *Take deep, slow breaths, take a break, ask for help, count to 10.*
Child Neglect

Failure to provide **support**, **acceptance**, **attention**, **warmth**, **supervision** and **normal living experience** for a child is considered neglect. Withholding these things can cause a child to not function normally in performance and behavior. Sometimes withholding things can also be child abuse. The difference between abuse and neglect is that if an adult **intentionally** withholds food, shelter or any other necessity as a punishment, then it is abuse, but if things are withheld by circumstance or lack of **awareness**, care, or education, then it is an act of neglect. Both **abuse** and **neglect** are crimes and violations of children’s human rights.

It is important for your program to offer parents information on resources in your community in an effort to prevent neglect before it occurs. Be proactive - work with your families from the first day they enter your program.
Key Point

Failure to provide support, acceptance, attention, warmth, supervision and normal living experience (such as water, food, clothing, housing, and protection) for a child is considered neglect.
Key Point

There are observable physical and behavioral indicators associated with abuse and neglect.
Interaction with Child and Family

What are some examples of things that could be shared with you or talked about that could help you recognize signs of abuse or neglect?

- Parent blames or belittles child
- Parent talks about child as bad or evil
- Parent smells of alcohol/drugs or seems to be under the influence
- Parent fails to keep appointments
- Parent seems unconcerned with child
- Parent mentions financial problems
- Parent talks about divorce, death, or illness
- Parent admits to alcohol or substance abuse
- Parent talks about domestic violence or shows signs
Key Point

Interaction with children and families provides information that may help the caregiver in recognizing possible cases of abuse and/or neglect.
Risk factors of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Child Risk Factors
- Parental/Family Risk Factors
- Social/Emotional Risk Factors
Child Risk Factors

- Premature birth and/or birth defect
- Chronic or serious illness
- Physical, mental, or emotional disability
- Temperament
- Aggressive behavior problems
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Childhood trauma
- A characteristic identified as undesirable
Parental/Family Risk Factors

• Personality factors:
  - Feeling of insecurity
  - Lack of trust
  - Low tolerance for frustration
  - Poor impulse control
  - Controlling
  - Depression
Cont. Parental/Family Risk Factors

- Childhood history of abuse
- Family structure
- Social isolation/lack of support
- Marital problems and divorce
- Death and/or illness
- Age
- Abuse of alcohol or other drugs
- Lack of parenting skills or living skills
- Financial problems
Social/Environmental Risk Factors

- Stressful life or community events
- Low socioeconomic status/poverty
- Homelessness
- Lack of access to medical care, health insurance, child care and social service
- Dangerous/violent neighborhood
- Community violence
- Cultural acceptance of abuse
Key Point

There are child, family and environmental factors that place children at risk for abuse and/or neglect.
The effects of child abuse and neglect can be serious and permanently affect children’s mental, physical and emotional development. Recent scientific studies of the brain reveal that the first years of a child’s life are critical to development. A child must receive adequate stimulation to ensure that nerve cells in the brain develop fully. Negative experiences, like trauma or abuse, are extremely detrimental in early years. The effects of abuse on a child can begin before a mother even gives birth.
The Impact of Trauma, Abuse, and Neglect

- Extreme anxiety
- Depression
- Inability to form healthy relationships
- Short attention span
- Easily distracted
- Poor self esteem
- Sleeping or eating disorders
Experiences throughout childhood can impair mental abilities that may cause a child to respond with **aggression** or **violence** to stressful or frustrating situations. The physical and emotional consequences of child abuse and neglect affect the child, family, caregiver, community and society.
Physical and Emotional Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Children

• Academic problems
• Behavior problems
• Sexual problems
• Confusion about identity
• Anxiety, Loss of trust, Depression
• Medical/dental problems
Key Point

The effects of child abuse and neglect can be serious and permanent to a child’s mental, physical and emotional development.
Strengthening Factors to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents
Working with Abused and Neglected Children

- Children who have been abused may not trust other people. Their experiences have shown them that getting close to people and trusting them causes discomfort and pain.
- These children need a close one-to-one relationship to develop and grow normally. They often reject warmth, hugs and affection at first.
- They may be slow in one or more areas of their development (motor, speech, and behavior.)
- Their behavior may be at one of two extremes: difficult to manage, destructive and irritable, or unusually shy and anxious to please.
- Abused and neglected children have very poor self-images. Important adults in their lives have had unrealistic expectations for these children, and they often are led to believe that they caused their own abuse.
- Parents of abused children may feel that you are a threat. They may be hostile and ungrateful toward you since they feel jealous, in competition, inadequate, or afraid you will learn their secrets and report them.
Key Point

It takes understanding, patience, and skill to work with abused and neglected children.
Child Abuse and Neglect

Module 2: Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
**Mandatory Reporters**

**Mandatory Reporter** - Any person, including, but not limited to, any:

a) physician, osteopathic physician, medical examiner, chiropractic physician, nurse, or hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of persons;

b) health or mental health professional other than (one listed in paragraph a);

c) practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing;

d) school teacher or other school official or personnel;

e) social worker, child care worker, or other professional child care provider, foster care, residential, or institutional worker;

f) law enforcement officer; or

g) judge who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or person responsible for the child’s welfare shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department (DCF) in the manner prescribed in subsection (2) of 39.201.
Mandatory Reporters

• Some occupations are specified in Florida law as required to do so.

• These occupations are considered “mandatory reporters.”

• A mandatory reporter is required by Florida Statute to provide his or her name to the Florida Abuse Hotline Counselor when reporting.

• A mandatory reporter’s name is entered into the record of the report but is held confidential.
Key Point

Child care workers are required by law to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.
As a child care provider it is your duty and your **legal responsibility** according to Chapter 39 F.S. to report any **suspected** case of child abuse or neglect. You don’t have to prove anything. That is the Investigator’s job. You should report that you **suspect** abuse or neglect to have occurred.
Four Ways to Report Abuse and Neglect

- Telephone
- Fax
- TDD
- Online

1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)
Key Point

The four ways abuse and neglect reports can be made to the Florida Abuse Hotline are: telephone, fax, TDD, and online.
Report Form

One of the children in your program arrives one morning with bruises on his arm. He is normally cheerful and animated, but today he is acting more quiet than usual. When questioned in the morning he tells you that he fell off his bike the previous day. Later in the day you hear him telling a co-worker that he fell down some stairs. The child lives with his father and an older brother who is in high school and plays on the football team. The child’s father is a mason and works very long hours, he is often in a hurry when he drops the child off in the morning and picks him up in the afternoon.
Key Point

Florida law ensures that confidentiality will be maintained for child care workers reporting suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.
Accusations of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Don’t become **defensive**.
- Cooperate fully and **factually** with authorities.
- Get statements from colleagues about your **character**.
- Know the **laws** related to abuse and neglect.
- Talk to a **lawyer** to ensure your rights and those of family members and helpers.
- Remember that **protective policies** you have put in place such as your discipline procedures and incident reports will help you.
- Work with your **director** and **colleagues** to handle the impact of the accusation on the school, other parents and students.
Agencies/Resources

- Child Protective Services
  Is the designated social service agency to receive, investigate, and provide rehabilitation services to children and families with problem of child maltreatment.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

- Department of Children and Families

  Provides a spectrum of services to preserve and protect the well being of children and families.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

- Law Enforcement and State Attorney’s Offices

Investigate cases of child abuse and neglect, and has victim advocacy programs to provide information and support through the legal system.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

• Medical Program and Community Agencies

Are places where staff provide attention to victims of child abuse and neglect, and provide counseling for the abused, the abuser or family members.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

- Legal Agencies

  Provide divorce, domestic violence injunction or guardian ad litem services.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

• Communities

Have the responsibility to establish and maintain required resources and educate families and individuals on child abuse and neglect prevention.

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Cont. of Agencies/Resources

• Individuals

Teach children about child abuse and neglect issues. You must be alert for signs of child abuse or neglect in children you know, give emotional support to victims of child abuse and neglect, and give support to programs that work to prevent child maltreatment.

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Key Point

There are local community resources that provide help for the abused and the abuser.
Key Point

A good resource for information is the Department of Children and Families child abuse website:

www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/