

A Walk Upstream

“No matter how many times they jumped into the water, more children kept floating down. There were 20, 40, a 100 of them!”

Recognizing child abuse and neglect

A first step in helping, or getting help for, an abused or neglected child is to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse.

The four major types of child maltreatment are:

- **Neglect** – failure to provide for basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or proper supervision.
- **Emotional Abuse** – when a parent fails to provide the understanding, warmth, attention and supervision a child needs for healthy psychological growth.

Possible symptoms:

- Signs of malnutrition; begs, steals or hoards food.
- Poor hygiene: matted hair, dirty skin or severe body odor.
- Unattended physical or medical problems.
- States that no one is home to provide care.
- Child or caretaker abuses drugs or alcohol.

Possible symptoms:

- Constant criticism, threatening, belittling, insulting or rejecting of a child by a parent or caretaker with no evidence of love, support or guidance.
- Behavior extremes from overly aggressive to overly passive.
- Delayed physical, emotional or intellectual development.

- **Physical Abuse** – intentional injury that may include severe shaking, beating, kicking, punching or burning that may result in minor marks, bruising or even death.

Possible symptoms:

- Broken bones or unexplained bruises, burns or welts in various stages of healing.
- Inability to explain an injury, or explanations inconsistent with the injury.
- Unusual fear of parent or caretaker, or fear of going home.
- Child reports intentional injury by parent or caretaker.

- **Sexual Abuse** – any sexual act with a child, including fondling or rubbing the child’s genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure or using the child for prostitution or the production of pornographic materials, by an adult or older child.

Possible symptoms:

- Pain or bleeding in anal or genital area with redness or swelling.
- Age-inappropriate play with toys, self or others.
- Inappropriate knowledge about sex.
- Child reports sexual abuse.

