

## HOW TO DOCUMENT INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

When documenting any indicators of child abuse or family violence remember to:

- record the information as soon as possible, including dates and times
- document the facts without personal judgements, opinions, conclusions, or medical/emotional diagnosis
- give a clear description of the situation, what was actually seen or heard, and not what you think might be happening
- include what you did or said and why
- describe any gestures made by a child (e.g., hitting motions, sound effects);
- record the words used by a child/parent, even if they are “slang” (especially terms for body parts or sexual behavior)
- include anything that someone else has said that might be important
- describe the size, color and shape of any injury (for example, bruises, marks, burns)
- hand write your own documentation in your own words, using pen
- cross out and initial any mistakes and continue documenting – do not use white-out
- document suspicions of abuse in a separate record
- include the name and phone number of the individual you spoke with at a child protection agency and/or police service, and any advice/direction given
- make sure the entry is complete, then sign and date it
- start a new entry if, at a later date, there is new information or further suspicions of abuse

***Your first recording of the facts is your documentation:***

- ***do not make a rough copy and then write it over in good;***
- ***do not go back and change any of your original notes; and***
- ***do not shred documentation.***

## INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

- Indicators are the signs, symptoms or clues which may mean that a child has been abused or may be at risk for abuse.
- Indicators do not prove that a child has been abused. They are clues that should warn people that a child may need help.
- Indicators may be seen in the child's physical health or behaviour, as well as those of the child's caregivers.
- Adults who abuse children may show certain behaviours and attitudes that make other people worry if they should be caring for children.

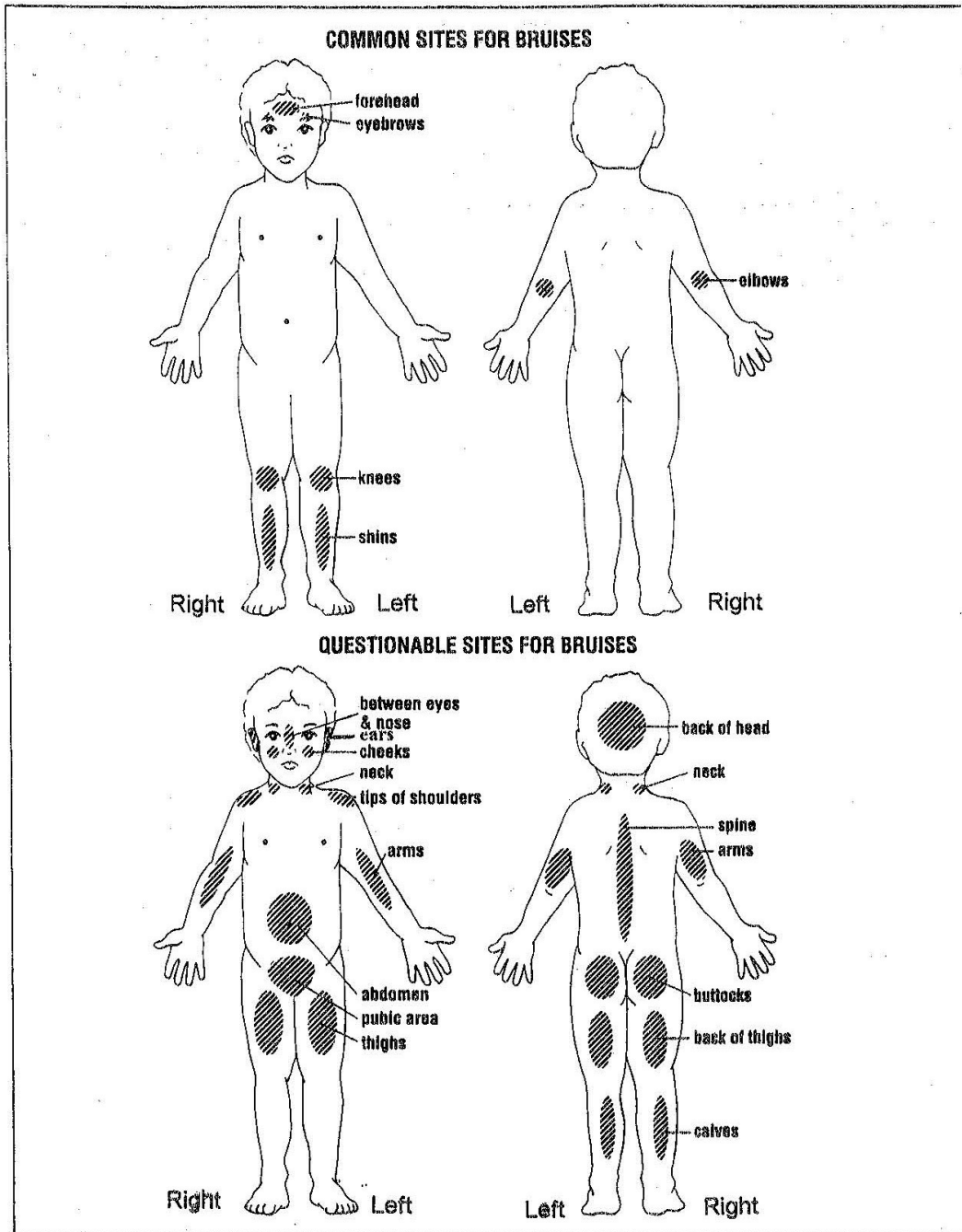
**POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT**

<b>PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO NEGLECT CHILDREN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an infant or young child may:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ not be growing as expected</li> <li>▪ be losing weight</li> <li>▪ have a “wrinkly old face”</li> <li>▪ look pale</li> <li>▪ not be eating well</li> </ul> </li> <li>• not dressed properly for the weather</li> <li>• dirty or unwashed</li> <li>• bad diaper rash or other skin problems</li> <li>• always hungry</li> <li>• lack of medical and/or dental care</li> <li>• signs of deprivation that improve with a more nurturing environment (e.g., hunger, diaper rash)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not show skills as expected</li> <li>• appears to have little energy</li> <li>• cries very little</li> <li>• does not play with toys or notice people</li> <li>• does not seem to care for anyone in particular</li> <li>• may be very demanding of affection or attention from others</li> <li>• older children may steal food, drink alcohol or take drugs, break the law</li> <li>• takes care of a lot of his/her needs on his/her own</li> <li>• has a lot of adult responsibility at home</li> <li>• discloses neglect (e.g., says there is no one at home)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not provide for the child’s basic needs</li> <li>• has a disorganized home life, with few regular routines (e.g., always brings the child very early, picks the child up very late)</li> <li>• does not supervise the child properly (e.g., leaves the child alone, in a dangerous place, or with someone who cannot look after the child safely)</li> <li>• indicates that the child is hard to care for, hard to feed, describes the child as demanding</li> <li>• may say that the child was or is unwanted</li> <li>• may ignore the child who is trying to be loving</li> <li>• has difficulty dealing with personal problems and needs</li> <li>• is more concerned with own self than the child</li> <li>• is not very interested in the child’s life (e.g., fails to use services offered or to keep child’s appointments, does not do anything about concerns that are discussed)</li> </ul>

**POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE**

<b>PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• see diagram for questionable injuries</li> <li>• bruises in the same area of the body</li> <li>• bruises in the shape of an object (e.g., spoon, hand/fingerprints, belt)</li> <li>• burns:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from a cigarette</li> <li>▪ in a pattern that looks like an object (e.g., iron)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• wears clothes to cover up injury, even in warm weather</li> <li>• patches of hair missing</li> <li>• signs of possible head injury:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ swelling and pain</li> <li>▪ nausea or vomiting</li> <li>▪ feeling dizzy</li> <li>▪ bleeding from the scalp or nose</li> </ul> </li> <li>• signs of possible injury to arms and legs:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ pain</li> <li>▪ sensitive to touch</li> <li>▪ cannot move properly</li> <li>▪ limping</li> </ul> </li> <li>• breathing causes pain</li> <li>• difficulty raising arms</li> <li>• human bite marks</li> <li>• cuts and scrapes inconsistent with normal play</li> <li>• signs of female genital mutilation (e.g., trouble going to the bathroom)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cannot remember how injuries happened</li> <li>• the explanation of what happened does not match the injury</li> <li>• refuses or is afraid to talk about injuries</li> <li>• is afraid of adults or of a particular person</li> <li>• does not want to be touched</li> <li>• may be very:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ aggressive</li> <li>▪ unhappy</li> <li>▪ withdrawn</li> <li>▪ obedient and wanting to please</li> <li>▪ uncooperative</li> </ul> </li> <li>• is afraid to go home</li> <li>• runs away</li> <li>• is away a lot and when comes back there are signs of a healing injury</li> <li>• does not show skills as expected</li> <li>• does not get along well with other children</li> <li>• tries to hurt him/herself (e.g., cutting oneself, suicide)</li> <li>• discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not give the same explanation as the child about how the injury happened</li> <li>• says that the child seems to have a lot of accidents</li> <li>• severely punishes the child</li> <li>• cannot control anger and frustration</li> <li>• expects too much from the child</li> <li>• talks about having problems dealing with the child</li> <li>• talks about the child as being bad, different or “the cause of my problems”</li> <li>• does not show love toward the child</li> <li>• does not go to the doctor right away to have injury checked</li> <li>• has little or no help caring for the child</li> </ul>

## CHILDREN'S BRUISES



(Source: Rimer & Prager, *Reaching Out: Working Together to Identify and Respond to Child Victims of Abuse*, 1998)

**POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

<b>PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a lot of itching or pain in the throat, genital or anal area</li> <li>• a smell or discharge from the genital area</li> <li>• underwear that is bloody</li> <li>• pain when:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ trying to go to the bathroom</li> <li>▪ sitting down</li> <li>▪ walking</li> <li>▪ swallowing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• blood in urine or stool</li> <li>• injury to the breasts or genital area:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ redness</li> <li>▪ bruising</li> <li>▪ cuts</li> <li>▪ swelling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• copying the sexual behaviour of adults</li> <li>• knowing more about sex than expected</li> <li>• details of sex in the child's drawings/writing</li> <li>• sexual actions with other children or adults that are inappropriate</li> <li>• fears or refuses to go to a parent, relative, or friend for no clear reason</li> <li>• does not trust others</li> <li>• changes in personality that do not make sense (e.g., happy child becomes withdrawn)</li> <li>• problems or change in sleep pattern (e.g., nightmares)</li> <li>• very demanding of affection or attention, or clinging</li> <li>• goes back to behaving like a young child (e.g., bed-wetting, thumb-sucking)</li> <li>• refuses to be undressed, or when undressing shows fear</li> <li>• tries to hurt oneself (e.g., uses drugs or alcohol, eating disorder, suicide)</li> <li>• discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be very protective of the child</li> <li>• clings to the child for comfort</li> <li>• is often alone with the child</li> <li>• may be jealous of the child's relationships with others</li> <li>• does not like the child to be with friends unless the parent is present</li> <li>• talk about the child being "sexy"</li> <li>• touches the child in a sexual way</li> <li>• may use drugs or alcohol to feel freer to sexually abuse</li> <li>• allows or tries to get the child to participate in sexual behaviour</li> </ul>

**POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

<b>PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the child does not develop as expected</li> <li>• often complains of nausea, headaches, stomach aches without any obvious reason</li> <li>• wets or dirties pants</li> <li>• is not given food, clothing and care as good as what the other children get</li> <li>• may have unusual appearance (e.g., strange haircuts, dress, decorations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is unhappy, stressed out, withdrawn, aggressive or angry for long periods of time</li> <li>• goes back to behaving like a young child (e.g., toileting problems, thumb-sucking, constant rocking)</li> <li>• tries too hard to be good and to get adults to approve</li> <li>• tries really hard to get attention</li> <li>• tries to hurt oneself (e.g., uses drugs or alcohol, suicide)</li> <li>• criticizes oneself a lot</li> <li>• does not participate because of fear of failing</li> <li>• may expect too much of him/herself so gets frustrated and fails</li> <li>• is afraid of what the adult will do if s/he does something the adult does not like</li> <li>• runs away</li> <li>• has a lot of adult responsibility</li> <li>• does not get along well with other children</li> <li>• discloses abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• often rejects, insults or criticizes the child, even in front of others</li> <li>• does not touch or speak to the child with love</li> <li>• talks about the child as being the cause for problems and things not going as wished</li> <li>• talks about or treats the child as being different from other children and family members</li> <li>• compares the child to someone who is not liked</li> <li>• does not pay attention to the child and refuses to help the child</li> <li>• isolates the child; does not allow the child to see others, both inside and outside the family (e.g., locks the child in a closet or room)</li> <li>• does not provide a good example for children on how to behave with others (e.g., swears all the time, hits others)</li> <li>• lets the child be involved in illegal activities</li> <li>• uses the child to make money (e.g., child pornography)</li> <li>• lets the child see sex and violence on TV, videos and in magazines</li> <li>• terrorizes the child (e.g., threatens to hurt or kill the child or threatens someone or something that is special to the child)</li> <li>• forces the child to watch someone special being hurt</li> <li>• asks the child to do more than s/he can do</li> </ul>

**POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

<b>PHYSICAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS IN CHILDREN</b>	<b>BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN ADULTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the child does not develop as expected</li> <li>• often complains of nausea, headaches, stomach aches without any obvious reason</li> <li>• physical harm, whether deliberate or accidental, during or after a violent episode, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- while trying to protect others</li> <li>- the result of objects thrown</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be aggressive and have temper tantrums</li> <li>• may show withdrawn, depressed, and nervous behaviours (e.g., clinging, whining, a lot of crying)</li> <li>• acts out what has been seen or heard between the partners</li> <li>• tries too hard to be good and to get adults to approve</li> <li>• afraid of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ someone's anger</li> <li>▪ one's own anger (e.g., killing the abuser)</li> <li>▪ self or other loved ones being hurt or killed</li> <li>▪ being left alone and not cared for</li> </ul> </li> <li>• problems sleeping (e.g., cannot fall asleep, afraid of the dark, does not want to go to bed, nightmares)</li> <li>• bed-wetting</li> <li>• tries to hurt oneself (e.g., eating disorders, uses drugs or alcohol, suicide)</li> <li>• stays around the house to keep watch, or tries not to spend much time at home</li> <li>• problems with school (e.g., trouble paying attention, poor marks, misses school a lot)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• abuser has trouble controlling self</li> <li>• abuser has trouble talking and getting along with others</li> <li>• abuser uses threats and violence (e.g., threatens to hurt, kill or destroy someone or something that is special; cruel to animals)</li> <li>• forces the child to watch a parent/partner being hurt</li> <li>• abuser is always watching what the partner is doing</li> <li>• abuser insults, blames, and criticizes partner in front of others</li> <li>• jealous of partner talking or being with others</li> <li>• abuser does not allow the child or family to talk with or see others</li> <li>• the abused person is not able to care properly for the children because of isolation, depression, trying to survive, or because the abuser does not give enough money</li> <li>• holds the belief that men have the power and women have to obey</li> <li>• uses drugs or alcohol</li> <li>• the abused person seems to be frightened</li> <li>• discloses family violence</li> </ul>

INFORMATION SHEET #4 POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE & OF EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expects a lot of oneself and is afraid to fail and so works very hard and gets good marks in school</li> <li>• takes the job of helping/protecting other family members</li> <li>• does not get along well with other children</li> <li>• runs away from home</li> <li>• cruelty to animals</li> <li>• older children may steal, hurt others, join a gang or break the law</li> <li>• child may act out sexually</li> <li>• child expresses the belief that s/he is responsible for the violence</li> <li>• discloses family violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discloses that the abuser assaulted or threw objects at someone holding a child</li> </ul>
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(Adapted from: Rimer & Prager, *Reaching Out: Working Together to Identify and Respond to Child Victims of Abuse*, 1998)