



## What is Child Abuse?

There are four main types of child abuse: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

Though each state is responsible for providing its own definitions of child abuse and neglect, according to the Federal minimum standards found in the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA), most include this basic information.

- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether these needs are physical, like failing to provide food or water or appropriate supervision; educational, like failing to educate a child or attend to special education needs; or emotional, like failing to provide proper emotional support or exposing the child to domestic violence.

Keep in mind that these situations are not always neglectful. Sometimes they are influenced by cultural values, community standards of care, or poverty. In these situations, the family is in need of information or assistance. When a family fails to use the information and resources and the child's needs continue to be unmet, further child welfare professional intervention may be necessary.

- **Physical abuse** is physical injury as a result of any physical action that harms the child. The injury can range in levels of severity, from minor bruises to severe fracture or death. Such injury is considered abuse even if the caretaker did not intend to hurt the child.
- **Sexual abuse** includes any sexual activity with a child, such as fondling, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and commercial exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.
- **Emotional abuse** is any pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, rejection or withholding love and support.