



# **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE**

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## *Signs and Symptoms of Abuse:*

Below is a list of signs indicating possible child abuse. They are provided as warning signals and should cause a mandated reporter to look further into the situation. It must be emphasized that bad or poor parenting is not against the law; only when it reaches a level where the child is endangered does it become child abuse.

Children will rarely report being abused. When they do tell of events that are abusive, they must be heard by encouraging them to provide further explanation. It is also rare for a child to lie about such events. Abused children tend to be extremely loyal to their parents, often demonstrating a surprising dependency upon them, given the abusive situation. They may try to adapt and comply in order to please their parents and may serve as caretakers to their parents in order to avoid further abuse or rejection. Consequently, it is necessary that adults observe childrens' behavior and listen to them with great care.

There are four basic areas in which abuse may be revealed:

- Physical indicators in the child
- Behavioral indicators displayed by the child
- Environmental problems
- Parental clues

These signs are believed to be relevant to a broad spectrum of mandated reporters working within Jewish institutions and agencies. **No individual symptom necessarily indicates child abuse. However, the more signs present in any situation the greater the risk of abuse and the more the institution or agency should look further into the child's safety.** Also, many of the signs are symptoms for other emotional difficulties in childhood. When they are observed, those responsible for the health and welfare of children should look further into the child's situation, even if abuse does not turn out to be the issue.

PHYSICAL ABUSE	BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS
<p>* Inconsistent, improbably or unexplained bruises and welts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on face, lips, mouth</li> <li>• on torso, back, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>• in various stages of healing</li> <li>• clustered, forming regular patterns</li> <li>• reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle)</li> <li>• on several different surface areas</li> <li>• regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation</li> <li>• human bite marks</li> <li>• black eyes</li> <li>• bald spots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Wary of adult contacts</li> <li>* Apprehensive when other children cry</li> <li>* Consistent or repetitive hostile or aggressive behavior toward others</li> <li>* Consistently verbally abusive</li> <li>* Repeated out of control behavior</li> <li>* Unusually dependent or "clingy" with adults</li> <li>* Extreme fear of others</li> <li>* Repeatedly destructive (breaks windows, sets fires)</li> <li>* Afraid to go home</li> <li>* Reports injury by parents</li> </ul>
<p>* Inconsistent, improbably or unexplained burns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks</li> <li>• immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like, doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia)</li> <li>• patterned like an electric burner, iron, etc.</li> <li>• rope burns on arms, leg, neck or torso</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Destructive to self and others</li> <li>* Early to school or stays late (as if afraid to go home)</li> <li>* Accident prone</li> <li>* Wears clothing that covers body when not appropriate (often many layers of clothing)</li> </ul>
<p>* Inconsistent, improbable or unexplained fractures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to skull, nose, facial structures</li> <li>• in various stages of healing</li> <li>• multiple or spiral fractures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Chronic runaway</li> <li>* Cant' tolerate physical contact or touch</li> </ul>

<b>PHYSICAL NEGLECT</b>	<b>BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Consistent hunger, malnutrition, hygiene</li> <li>* Inappropriate dress for weather</li> <li>* Failure to gain height, emaciated</li> <li>* Consistent lack of supervision, (especially in dangerous activities or for long periods of time)</li> <li>* Unattended physical problems, medical problems, offensive body odor or other needs.</li> <li>* Abandonment</li> <li>* Untreated lice, distended stomach</li> <li>* Dirty or unkempt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Begging or stealing food</li> <li>* Constant fatigue, exhausted</li> <li>* States there is no caretaker at home</li> <li>* Frequent school absence or tardiness</li> <li>* Destructive, Pugnacious</li> <li>* School dropout (adolescent)</li> <li>* Abuses alcohol and/or drugs</li> <li>* Seems depressed or passive</li> <li>* Isolative</li> </ul>
<b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b>	<b>BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Difficulty in walking or sitting</li> <li>* Complains of lower abdominal pain</li> <li>* Torn, stained or bloody underclothing</li> <li>* Pain or itching/bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas</li> <li>* Swollen genitalia</li> <li>* Pain when urinating</li> <li>* Frequent unexplained sore throats</li> <li>* Frequent urinary or yeast infections</li> <li>* Vaginal/penile discharge</li> <li>* Venereal disease</li> <li>* Early pregnancies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Unwilling to participate in physical activities</li> <li>* Reluctant to change clothes in front of others</li> <li>* Exhibits unusual sexual behavior or knowledge beyond developmental stage</li> <li>* Either avoids or seeks out adults</li> <li>* Sudden drop in school performance</li> <li>* Crying with no provocation</li> <li>* Anorexia (especially adolescents)</li> <li>* Sexually provocative</li> <li>* Self-destructive</li> <li>* Fear of or seductiveness towards males</li> <li>* Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)</li> <li>* Chronic runaways</li> </ul>

EMOTIONAL ABUSE	BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Speech disorders</li> <li>* Lags in physical development</li> <li>* Failure to thrive</li> <li>* Asthma, severe allergies or ulcers</li> <li>* Substance abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Habit disorders (sucking, biting or rocking)</li> <li>* Behavioral extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compliant, passive</li> <li>• aggressive, demanding</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Overly adaptive behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inappropriately adult</li> <li>• inappropriately infantile</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Developmental lags (mental, emotional)</li> <li>* Delinquent behavior (especially adolescents)</li> <li>* Bed wetting</li> <li>* Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive)</li> <li>* Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)</li> <li>* Lacks self-esteem; puts self down constantly</li> <li>* Seeks approval to an extreme</li> <li>* Seems unable to be autonomous (e.g. makes few choices, fears rejection)</li> <li>* Hostile, verbally abuse, provocative</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Environmental problems:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Hazardous living conditions (broken windows, faulty electrical fixtures, etc.).</li> <li>* Health risks (presence of rats, feces, no running water, no heat) or unsanitary conditions.</li> <li>* Extreme dirt or filth affecting health.</li> </ul>
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**Parental Clues:**

- \* Parent is unable/unwilling to meet child's basic needs and provide a safe environment.
- \* Parent describes homicidal thoughts/feelings toward child.
- \* Parent describes use of objects (belts, whips, clothes hanger) to discipline the child.
- \* Parent is unable to describe positive characteristics of child.
- \* Parent has unrealistic expectation of child (e.g. expecting a 6-month-old to be toilet trained).
- \* Parent uses "out of control" discipline.
- \* Parent is unduly harsh and rigid about childrearing.
- \* Parent singles out one child as "bad", "evil", or "beyond control".
- \* Parent berates, humiliates or belittles child constantly.
- \* Parent turns to child to meet parent's own needs.
- \* Parent is impulsive, unable to use internal controls.
- \* Parent cannot see child realistically, attributes badness to child or misinterprets child's normal behavior (e.g. a parent takes an infant's crying as a sign that the child hates the parent).
- \* Parent is indifferent to child.