





Child Abuse and Neglect in Indian Country





Physical Abuse

- Characterized by the infliction of intentional, non-accidental physical injury.
 - Parent or caretaker may not have intended to harm the child.
 - Injury may have resulted in over-discipline or physical punishment.
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Physical Abuse

- Physical indicators:
 - ▶ Unexplained bruises
 - ▶ Welts, human bite marks
 - ▶ Unexplained burns, especially cigarette
 - ▶ Unexplained fractures, lacerations, abrasions
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Physical Abuse

- Behavioral indicators:
 - ▶ Self-destructive
 - ▶ Withdrawn and aggressive
 - ▶ Uncomfortable with physical contact
 - ▶ Chronic runaway
 - ▶ Wears clothing inappropriate for weather to cover body



Child Neglect

- Failure of a parent or caretaker to provide for the child's basic needs:
 - ▶ Food
 - ▶ Shelter
 - ▶ Clothing
 - ▶ Medical
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Supervision



Child Neglect

- Physical indicators:
 - ▶ Abandonment
 - ▶ Unattended medical needs
 - ▶ Consistent hunger
 - ▶ Inappropriate dress
 - ▶ Poor hygiene
 - ▶ Lack of supervision for extended periods of time



Child Neglect

- Behavioral indicators:
 - ▶ Displays fatigue, listlessness
 - ▶ Steals food, begs for food
 - ▶ Frequently absent from school or tardy
 - ▶ Self destructive
 - ▶ Embarrassed about clothing being dirty, inappropriate, not fitting well, etc.




Sexual Abuse

- Occurs when the abuser is using the child for sexual gratification or exploitation and includes:
 - Intercourse
 - Oral/anal/vaginal penetration
 - Incest, rape, sodomy
 - Exhibitionism
 - Commercial exploitation through prostitution, or pornographic materials

IHS/BIA Child Protection Handbook-2005

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Sexual Abuse

- Physical indicators:
 - ▶ Torn, stained or bloody underclothes
 - ▶ Pain or itching in genital area
 - ▶ Difficulty sitting or walking
 - ▶ Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia
 - ▶ Venereal disease
 - ▶ Frequent urinary or yeast infections




Sexual Abuse

- Behavioral indicators:
 - ▶ Withdrawn, chronic depression
 - ▶ Excessive seductiveness
 - ▶ Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
 - ▶ Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence
 - ▶ Massive weight change
 - ▶ Suicide attempts
 - ▶ Sudden school difficulties
 - ▶ Inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex
 - ▶ Promiscuity
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Emotional Abuse/Neglect

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- Acts of omissions by the parent or caregiver that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders. This would include:
 - Failure to provide the child with a nurturing environment.





Emotional Abuse/Neglect

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- Physical indicators:
 - Speech disorders
 - Delayed physical development
 - Substance abuse
 - Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies
 - Distrust of adults
 - Reluctant to go home




Emotional Abuse/Neglect


- Behavioral indicators:
 - ▶ Habit disorders (sucking, rocking)
 - ▶ Anti-social, destructive
 - ▶ Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
 - ▶ Passive and aggressive behavioral extremes
 - ▶ Developmentally delayed
 - ▶ Often assumes parental role
 - ▶ Difficulty in forming relationships
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Medical Neglect



The failure to provide appropriate health care for a child although financially able to do so. In some cases, a parent or caretaker will withhold traditional medical care during the practice of religious beliefs. These cases generally do not fall under the definition of medical neglect, however, some states will obtain a court order forcing medical treatment of a child in order to save a child's life or prevent life-threatening injury resulting from the lack of treatment.



Medical neglect can result in poor overall health and compounded medical problems.

Medical Neglect

- Failure to Thrive
 - ▶ A significantly underweight child, usually under 18 months.
 - ▶ Approximately 30% of these cases have an organic cause and require the adult to seek medical attention.
 - ▶ Warning signs include:
 - Prominent ribs
 - Thin buttocks
 - Much wrinkled skin
 - Spindly arms and legs