



## Mental Health and Wellness Volume 8

### Types of Abuse

**Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs.

**Physical abuse** is physical injury as a result of hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or otherwise harming a child.

**Sexual abuse** is any situation where a child is used for sexual gratification. This may include indecent exposure, fondling, rape, or 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, including constant criticism, threats, and rejection.

**Trafficking** is another type of child maltreatment. States are required to consider any child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking (as defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act) as a victim of "child abuse and neglect" and "sexual abuse."

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

Traumatic events may impair a child's ability to trust others, their sense of personal safety, and effectiveness in navigating life changes.

Research shows that child maltreatment, like other trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), is associated with poor physical health and mental health outcomes in children and families, and those negative effects can last a lifetime.

By definition, children in the child welfare system have suffered at least one ACE. Recent studies have shown that, in comparison to the general population, these children are far more likely to have experienced at least four ACEs

The trauma of child abuse or neglect has been associated with increased risk of the following:

- Depression and suicide attempts
- Substance use
- Developmental disabilities and learning problems
- Social problems with other children and with adults
- Teen pregnancy
- Lack of success in school
- Domestic violence
- Chronic illnesses, including heart disease, cancer, and lung disease, among others

### Risk Factors

There are many risk factors for abuse, of course abuse is not limited to individuals with these risk factors.

- Children younger than 4 years of age
- Special needs that may increase caregiver burden
- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs, child development and parenting skills
- Parental history of child abuse and or neglect
- Substance abuse and/or mental health issues including depression in the family
- Parental characteristics such as young age, low education, single parenthood, large number of dependent children, and low income
- Nonbiological, transient caregivers in the home (e.g., mother's male partner)
- Parental thoughts and emotions that tend to support or justify maltreatment behaviors
- Social isolation
- Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence, including intimate partner violence
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions
- Community violence
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (e.g., high poverty and residential instability, high unemployment rates, and high density of alcohol outlets), and poor social connections.

# Teen Parents

Every parent needs support sometimes. If you think stress may be affecting how you treat your baby, it's time to find some help. Try the following:

**Join a support group.** A group for young moms or dads could give you time with new friends who have lives similar to yours. Your children can play with other children, and you can talk about your problems with people who understand. Look on the Internet (e.g., Meetup.com, Yahoo! groups) or call your local social services agency for information about support groups in your community.

**Find ways to reduce stress.** Take a break while someone reliable cares for your baby. Take a walk with the baby in a stroller, or rest while your baby naps. A social worker or nurse can help you learn other ways to manage stress.

**Become a regular at baby-friendly places in your community.** The playground and story time at the local library are great places to bond with your baby while getting to know other parents.

**Finish school.** Even though it may be difficult, finishing high school (or getting a GED) is one of the most important things you can do to help your baby and yourself. A diploma will help you get a better job or take the next step in your education, such as vocational training or college.

**Improve your parenting skills.** Don't be afraid to ask for advice from experienced parents. Classes for parents can also help you build on what you already know about raising a happy, healthy child.

## Resources

Parents Anonymous® Inc. runs a National Parent Helpline (1.855.4A.PARENT) for parents who need help or parenting advice

National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1.888.373.7888 or visit <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's hotline at 1.800.THE.LOST or report incidents online at <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline>.

If you suspect abuse Contact Child Protective services in the county where the suspected abuse occurred.

## STATISTICS

4.1

MILLION

CHILD ABUSE REPORTS  
MADE IN 2017

674,000

CHILDREN WERE FOUND TO  
BE VICTIMS OF ABUSE OR  
NEGLECT

5

CHILDREN DIE  
EVERYDAY DUE TO  
ABUSE

## School is a great place to reach out for help

You may want to reach out to someone to talk to about how you're feeling or to get advice on how to help your friend. Consider talking to a:

School Psychologist, School Nurse, Student Advisor, Teacher, or Coach