

## Program Reflection: Recognizing the Signs of Abuse and Neglect

You have a dual responsibility to (a) recognize signs of abuse and neglect and (b) ensure staff members can recognize signs of abuse and neglect. Take some time to think about where you as a staff are and where you need to be.

If you were to conduct random spot checks in your building, would all staff members know the signs and behavioral indicators of abuse and neglect? Below you will find a list of scenarios. Use them to ensure staff members can recognize signs of abuse and neglect. You can discuss a scenario during a staff meeting or use them as booster with individual staff members who need support.

<p>Channing’s dad never has much to say when he comes to the program. He seems very guarded and private. When you ask the children to bring in pictures from home for a project, Channing’s dad gets very upset that you are violating the family’s privacy. Channing says he is not allowed to work on the project or talk about his family.</p>	<p><i>You can and should respect a family’s right to privacy. If they don’t want to share information, that is OK. You should always continue to monitor the well-being of all your children, though. Being secretive or unduly protective of a child can be a sign of abuse. Watch for other signs and make a report if you suspect maltreatment.</i></p>
<p>Violet, age 11, is having a hard time walking. When she sits down, she acts like it hurts. You ask her what is wrong. She just looks down and says, “Nothing.” A few days later, she is playing soccer with the other children. She rolls up her pant legs stretches on the ground when she gets warm. You notice dark purple bruises on her inner thighs. She seems to remember the bruises are there and rolls the pant legs back down below her knees.</p>	<p><i>Violet might have been the victim of sexual abuse. Pain or difficulty walking or sitting is a warning sign of this type of abuse. Do not question the child further; sexual abuse is a very sensitive topic and is best left to a trained counselor and the investigators. Simply document what you have seen and report your suspicions right away.</i></p>
<p>Edgar has always been a little “dad.” He seems to take care of other children. You have noticed that he always seems especially concerned about his three younger siblings. Today you caught him stuffing extra snack in his pocket. He said he needed to take it home for his brothers and sisters.</p>	<p><i>Edgar seems to be taking on a parenting role for his younger siblings. Continue to monitor, but this could be an early warning sign of child neglect.</i></p>

<p>Bryce has been out of the program for a few days. His parents had called in to report him sick. On his first day back, though, you notice fading bruises on various parts of his body.</p>	<p><i>Bryce’s bruises could be a sign of physical abuse. Absences from the program and physical injuries should be documented and reported.</i></p>
<p>Cecelia’s mom drops her off and says, “You better stop being evil today. I swear you are no good, and I wish I did not even have to pick you back up.”</p>	<p><i>Cecelia’s mom is talking very negatively of her. She is belittling and critical. These are signs of emotional abuse and should be reported.</i></p>
<p>Quentin, age 9, comes to the program with a can of beer in his backpack.</p>	<p><i>Alcohol or substance-use in children can be a sign of neglect. Work with the program staff. Ask Quentin and his parents about the alcohol. Continue to monitor the situation.</i></p>
<p>Camron (age 6) is very loved by his mother. She holds him for several minutes before leaving him at the before-school program. She tells him, “I don’t know what I would do without you. You are my best friend. It is you and me against the world, kid.”</p>	<p><i>This could be a sign that Camron’s mother is using him to meet her own emotional needs. Continue monitoring the situation and provide social supports to Camron and his mother.</i></p>
<p>Alecia, age 6 months, has had a severe cough for at least two weeks. It has gotten so bad that her whole body seems to seize up when she coughs. She wheezes and seems exhausted. You are very concerned about her health and have expressed your concerns to her mom. Mom just keeps saying, “It’s getting better. The doctor will just tell me it’s a cold and there’s nothing they can do. It’s a waste of time.”</p>	<p><i>Alecia may be experiencing medical neglect. Alecia’s mother does not seem to be providing necessary medical care despite the financial means to do so. Document what you have observed and make a report.</i></p>
<p>Corrinne, age 8, always keeps to herself. She rarely smiles or talks to the other children. She seems to prefer to sit off by herself. She often complains of stomach aches and headaches. When her parents pick her up in the evenings, they seem cold towards each other. She seems to shrink away when her dad touches her</p>	<p><i>Corrinne may be experiencing sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. There are no clear physical signs, but her behavior is indicative of a concern. Consult with FAP about your concerns and develop a plan of action.</i></p>

<p>shoulder.</p>	
<p>It is 6:30pm. Keila’s mom has not yet arrived to pick her up, and Keila is not registered for any sort of evening care. You have tried calling all the numbers you have for Keila’s authorized pick-ups, but no one answers. This is the third time this has happened this month. You cannot reach anyone, and the program is supposed to be closed for the evening.</p>	<p><i>Keila may be experiencing neglect. Your program should have clear policies about what to do when children are left after hours and families should be aware of these policies. If you have talked to the family about the situation and no improvements have been made, consult with FAP.</i></p>
<p>Emile’s mother has a history of drug and alcohol abuse, but she has been clean since she became pregnant with Emile’s oldest sister. Lately, she has seemed different when she picked Emile up: she is distant, has a hard time making eye contact, slurs her words, and seems rough with Emile. You have seen enough of a pattern now to suspect that she is using again. She has several children across the child and youth programs, and the youngest is only an infant. Emile says he takes care of the baby a lot.</p>	<p><i>Emile and his siblings may be experiencing neglect due to his mother’s drug use. Consult with FAP about the situation.</i></p>