

# Identification of Child Abuse Cases

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# Procedural Guide For Handling Child Abuse Cases (SWD Revised 2007)

## **Definition**

**Child abuse is defined as any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical / psychological health and development of an individual under the age of 18.**

# Physical *Abuse*

- A physical injury or physical suffering to a child (including non-accidental use of force, deliberate poisoning, suffocation, burning, fabricated or induced illnesses)
- There is a definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury has been inflicted non-accidentally;

# Sexual Abuse

- The involvement of a child in sexual activity (e.g. rape, oral sex) which is unlawful
- To which a child is unable to give informed consent.
- Includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation and abuse of a child
- May be rewarded or apparently attractive to the child.
- Differentiates from casual sexual relationship that does not include any sexual exploitation

# Neglect

- Severe or a repeated pattern of lacking of attention to a child's basic needs that endangers or impairs the child's health or development.
- Physical (e.g. failure to provide necessary food, clothing or shelter, failure to prevent physical injury or suffering, lack of appropriate supervision or left unattended)
- Medical (e.g. failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- Educational (e.g. failure to provide education or ignoring educational needs arising from a child's disability)
- Emotional (e.g. ignoring a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting a child to use alcohol or other drugs)

# Psychological Abuse

- The repeated pattern of behaviour and attitudes towards a child.
- Extreme incident impairs the child's emotional or intellectual development.
- Examples include acts of spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting / denying emotional responsiveness, conveying to a child that he/she is worthless, flawed, unwanted or unloved.

# Physical Abuse

- Bruises and Welts
- Lacerations and Abrasions
- Burns and Scalds
- Fractures
- Internal Injuries

# *Physical Abuse*

- Others
  - Fabricated or induced illnesses
  - Poisoning
  - Hair loss by pulling or burning
  - Drowning



# *Sexual Abuse (Both sexes)*

- **Physical Indicators**

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Complaints of pain, swelling or itching in the genital area
- Complaints of pain on urination
- Bruises, bleeding, or lacerations in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area, mouth or throat
- Vaginal / penile discharge
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Early adolescent pregnancy

# *Sexual Abuse (Both sexes)*

- Behavioural Indicators

- Appetite disturbance
- Sexual exploitation of young children
- Poor peer relationship
- Unwilling to participate in physical activities
- Behaviour disturbance (anorexia nervosa, obesity, self-mutilation, run away, suicide, promiscuity, drug abuse)
- Sexual knowledge or behaviour that is abnormally advanced for the respective age of the child

# *Sexual Abuse (Both sexes)*

- **Behavioural Indicators**

- Marked change in academic performance
- Sleep disturbance
- Excessive masturbation
- Excessive reaction to being touched
- Intensive dislike for being left somewhere or with someone

# *Neglect*

- Physical Indicators

- Malnutrition, under-weight, or lacking sufficient quantity and/or quality of food
- Delayed development
- Severe rash or skin disorder
- Left in care of inappropriate carer (e.g. young child, stranger)
- Inadequately supervised for long periods or when engaged in dangerous activities
- Unattended physical problems or unmet medical / dental needs
- Chronically dirty / untidy

# *Neglect*

- Physical Indicators

- Habitual absence from school or deprivation of schooling
- Spoiled food found at home
- Unsanitary living conditions (garbage, excretion, dirt, etc)
- Young child unattended for long periods
- Abandoned : totally or for long periods of time
- Child confined at home

# *Neglect*

- Behavioural Indicators
  - Persistent complaints of hunger or rummaging for food, overtly aggressive eating habit or begs for / steals food
  - Assumes responsibilities inappropriate to age
  - Addiction
  - Delinquency
  - Complaints of inadequate care, supervision or nurturing
  - Being made to work excessive hours / beyond physical ability
  - Poor peer relationship

# *Neglect*

- Behavioural Indicators
  - Responds to questions in monosyllables
  - Extreme apprehension
  - Sexual activity caused by inadequate supervision
  - Reluctant to return home
  - Runs away from home

# *Psychological Abuse*

- Physical Indicators
  - Failure to thrive
  - Developmental delay e.g. speech disorder
  - Anorexia nervosa



# *Psychological Abuse*

- Behavioural Indicators

- Indicators in Child

- Alienation
    - Habit disorder
    - Wetting / soiling
    - Learning disorder e.g. marked deterioration in academic performance
    - Lags in mental, emotional, social development
    - Self harm or suicidal thoughts / attempts
    - Disruptive behaviour or conduct problems
    - Sleep disturbance
    - Appetite disturbance
    - Speech impediment

# *Psychological Abuse*

- Behavioural Indicators
  - Indicators in Family
    - Rejection
    - Constant scolding
    - Humiliating criticism
    - Inducing fear
    - Encouraging deviant behaviour
    - Bizarre punishment

# Guide to Decision Making in Risk Assessment Process

- Whether the child is in immediate danger or future risk of abuse.
- What social services, actions, or support system are necessary to protect the child during the investigation.
- Whether or not the child must be removed from home for his/her protection.
- What initial action plan is needed to address the factors that are placing the child at risk.
- What modifications, if any, must be made to the action plan to further reduce risk and enhance safety of the child.
- When it is safe to return a child home, if the child has been removed.
- When sufficient care is being provided that would support case closure.

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Child's age, Physical and mental abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•10 years and over</li><li>•No physical or mental handicaps / limitations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•5 through 9 years of age</li><li>•Emotionally Withdrawn</li><li>•Minor physical illness / mental handicap</li><li>•Mild to moderately impaired development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Less than 5 years of age</li><li>•Severe physical illness / mental handicap</li><li>•Over-active</li><li>•Difficult or provocative</li><li>•Severely impaired development</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Severity and / or frequency of abuse, physical or sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•No injury or minor injury</li><li>•Not requiring medical attention</li><li>•No discernible effect on child</li><li>•Isolated incident</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Minor physical injury or unexplained injury requiring medical treatment /diagnosis</li><li>•History or pattern of punishment / discipline</li><li>•Mild sexual confrontation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Child requires immediate medical treatment and/or hospitalization</li><li>•History or pattern of excessive punishment / discipline / sexual molestation</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

Factor	A. Low Risk	B. Intermediate Risk	C. High Risk
Severity and / or frequency of neglect and recentness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•No discernible effect on child</li><li>•Isolated incident</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Caretaker suspected of failing meet minimum medical, and/or shelter needs of child</li><li>•Unconfirmed history or pattern leaving child unsupervised</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Caretaker is unwilling to meet minimal medical, food and/or shelter needs of child</li><li>•Confirmed history or pattern of leaving child unsupervised or unprotected for excessive periods of time</li><li>•Child at severe risk of harm</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

Factor	A. Low Risk	B. Intermediate Risk	C. High Risk
Location of injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Bony body parts</li><li>•knee</li><li>•Elbows</li><li>•Buttocks</li></ul>	Torso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Head</li><li>• Face</li><li>• Genitals</li></ul>
School problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Regular attendance</li><li>•No reported school problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Frequent absence</li><li>•Some behavioural problems</li><li>•Child comes untidy and hungry</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Severe behaviour problems</li><li>•Parents uncooperative</li><li>•Child fearful of parental contact</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

Factor	A. Low Risk	B. Intermediate Risk	C. High Risk
Caretaker's physical, intellectual, or emotional abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No intellectual / physical limitations</li> <li>•Realistic expectations of child</li> <li>•In full control of mental faculties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•May be physically / emotionally handicapped</li> <li>•Moderate intellectual limitations</li> <li>•Past criminal / mental health record / history</li> <li>•Poor reasoning abilities</li> <li>•Needs planning and assistance to protect child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severely handicapped</li> <li>• Poor perception of reality</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations / perception of child's behaviour</li> <li>• Severe intellectual limitations</li> <li>• Incapacity due to alcohol / drug intoxication</li> </ul>



# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Caretaker's level of cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Willingness and ability to work with agency to resolve problem and protect child</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Overtly compliant with investigator</li><li>•Presence / ability of non-offending adult to assure minimal cooperation with agency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Doesn't believe there is a problem</li><li>•Refuses to cooperate;</li><li>•Uninterested or evasive</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Caretaker's parenting skills and/or knowledge	•Caretaker exhibits appropriate parenting skills and knowledge	•Inconsistent display of the necessary parenting skills and/or knowledge to provide a minimal level of child care	•Caretaker is unwilling / incapable of exercising the necessary parenting skills and/or knowledge to assure a minimal level of child care

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Presence of a parent substitute in the home	•Parent substitute in the home is viewed as supportive / stabilizing influence	•Parent substitute is in the home on an infrequent basis •Or assumes only minimal caretaker responsibility for the child	•Parent substitute resides with the family and is the alleged offender

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Previous history of abuse / neglect	No previous reported history of abuse / neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Previous indicated report of abuse / neglect</li><li>•Protective services provided to the child, family or offender</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Pending child abuse / neglect investigation</li><li>•Previous indicated abuse / neglect report of a serious nature</li><li>•Multiple reports of abuse / neglect involving the child, family or offender</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Strength of Family support systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Family, neighbours, or friends available and committed to help</li><li>•Participation in church, community, or social group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Family supportive but not in geographic area</li><li>•Some support from friends and neighbours</li><li>•Limited community services available</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Relatives or friends unavailable / uncommitted or destructive</li><li>•Geographically isolated from community services</li><li>•No phone or means of transportation available</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Perpetrator's access to child	•Out of home, no access to child	•In home, access to child is difficult •Child is under constant supervision of other adult in the home	•In home, complete access to child •Uncertainty if other adult can protect child

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Environmental condition of the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Home in relatively clean with no apparent safety or health hazards</li><li>•Functional utilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Trash and garbage not disposed and hazardous water and/or electricity inoperative</li><li>•Infestation of ants, roaches or other vermin.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Living in condemned and/or structurally unsound residence</li><li>•Exposed wiring and/or other potential fire / safety hazards present</li></ul>

# Assessment Matrix

<b>Factor</b>	<b>A. Low Risk</b>	<b>B. Intermediate Risk</b>	<b>C. High Risk</b>
Stresses / crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Stable family</li><li>•Steady employment or income</li><li>•Means of transportation available</li><li>•Strong relationship with relatives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Pregnancy or recent birth of a child</li><li>•Insufficient income and/or food</li><li>•Inadequate home management skills / knowledge</li><li>•Relationship with relatives characterized by mutual hostility</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Death of spouse</li><li>•Recent change in marital or relationship status</li><li>•Acute psychiatric episodes</li><li>•Spouse abuse / marital conflict</li><li>•Drug / alcohol dependency</li><li>•Chaotic life-style</li><li>•Criminal activity</li><li>•Frequent arrests</li></ul>



# Assessment Matrix

Factor	A. Low Risk	B. Intermediate Risk	C. High Risk
Substance abuse drug / alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•No drug / alcohol use;</li><li>•Caretaker's drug / alcohol use does not influence parenting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Drug / alcohol use impairs caretaker's functioning</li><li>•Connected to major presenting problem</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Regular heavy use of drug / alcohol resulting in chronic endangerment to child</li><li>•Prevents working on case plan</li></ul>

# Myths About Child Abuse

- 1. Loving parents won't harm their children**
- 2. Parents/ carers have no alternative**
- 3. Disclosure of child abuse breaks up families**
- 4. Children or adolescents with behavioural problems are not trustworthy**

Thank You !