

Emotional Abuse and Maltreatment

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause a severe and persistent adverse effect on their emotional development. It may involve making them feel or believe they are worthless/unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond their capacity. Such acts can include constant criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child. This kind of abuse also includes failure by a parent/caregiver to provide their child with love, emotional support and guidance.

The recognition of emotional abuse is based on observations over time of the quality of relationship between the parent/caregiver and child.

Watch for Parent/Caregiver Behaviours

- Poor attachment relationship with the child.
- Unresponsive or neglectful behaviour towards child's emotional or psychological needs.
- Persistent negative comments about the child.
- Inappropriate or inconsistent developmental expectations of the child.
- Parental problems that supersede the needs of the child.
- Dysfunctional family relationships including domestic violence.

Watch for Child Behaviours

- Emotional indicators such as low self esteem, unhappiness, fear, distress and anxiety.
- Behavioural indicators such as attention seeking, opposing, being withdrawn and insecurity.
- Physical indicators such as failure to thrive/faltering growth, delay in achieving developmental, cognitive or educational milestones.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is conflict characterized by violent or abusive behaviours that occur within the child's home environment. It

Halton Children's Aid Society Contact Information

To make a report or request a consultation,
call either of the numbers below
24 hours a day, seven days a week

905.333.4441 or 1.866.607.KIDS (5437)

Ask to speak with a
CAS Telephone Intake Worker

Vision

Helping Children, Youth and
Families Thrive

Mission

Working with families and
communities to protect children
and youth while respecting their
diverse needs



Different Forms of Child Abuse and Maltreatment



Physical Abuse or Maltreatment

Visible Signs

- Injuries to any part of the body.
- Children who find it painful to walk, sit down, move their jaws or are in some other kind of pain.
- Injuries that are not typical of the bumps and scrapes associated with children's activities.
- Regular occurrence of unexplained injuries.
- The child who is frequently injured where even apparently reasonable explanations are given.

Behavioural Signs

- Furtive, secretive behaviour.
- Uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawal behaviour.
- Compulsive eating or sudden loss of appetite.
- Child who suddenly becomes ill co-ordinated.
- Child who finds it difficult to stay awake.
- Child who is repeatedly absent.

What to Listen For

- Confused or conflicting explanations of how the injuries were sustained.
- Evaluate carefully what is said and preferably document it verbatim.
- Consider if the explanation is in keeping with the nature, age and site of the injury.

Consider

- What do you know about the family?
- Is there a history of known or suspected abuse?
- Has the family been under stress recently?
- Do you have concerns about the family?

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not they are aware of, or consent to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative acts such as sexual assault, buggery, oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children may be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people in caregiving roles. There may be no recognizable signs of sexual abuse, but the following indicators may be signs a child is being, or has been, sexually abused.

Physical Signs

- Signs of blood/other discharge on child's underclothes.
- Awkwardness in walking or sitting down.
- Tummy/abdominal pain.
- Regression to enuresis.
- Tiredness.

Behavioral Signs

- Extreme variations in behavior, e.g., anxiety, aggression or withdrawal.
- Sexually provocative behaviour or knowledge is incompatible with child's age and understanding.
- Drawings and/or written work that are sexually explicit (indirect disclosure).
- Direct disclosure—it is important to recognize young children have neither the experience nor understanding to be able to make up stories about sexual assault unless they have been coached to do so. This determination is made by the CAS/police during the course of a thorough investigation.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may involve a parent or caregiver failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators of neglect are recognizable in the child, in the parent/caregivers' behaviours and within the home environment.

Physical Signs

- Abnormal growth including failure to thrive.
- Underweight or obese.
- Recurrent infection.
- Unkempt dirty appearance.
- Smelly.
- Inadequate/unwashed clothes.
- Hunger.
- Listlessness.

Behavioural Signs

- Attachment disorders.
- Indiscriminate friendliness.
- Poor social relationships.
- Poor concentration.
- Developmental delays.
- Low self esteem.

Environmental Signs

- Insufficient food and heating.
- Risk from animals/creeping vermin in household.
- Inappropriate sleeping arrangements and inadequate bedding.
- Poor household sanitation.