



Useful Definitions

Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to protecting our children. It's helpful to start with some basic definitions:²

Physical Abuse – A non-accidental injury to a child. Physical abuse may include, but is not limited to, burning, beating, kicking and punching. There *could* be physical evidence of bruises, burns, broken bones or other unexplained injuries.

Sexual Abuse – Any intentional touching or close contact that can be reasonably construed as being for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, or any other improper purpose. It includes accosting, soliciting, or enticing a child to commit sexual acts.

Child Maltreatment – The treatment of a child that involves cruelty or suffering that a reasonable person would recognize as excessive. It may include humiliation, severe punishment and other actions.

Mental Injury Abuse – A pattern of physical or verbal acts by a parent or caregiver that results in psychological or emotional injury to a child. Examples of such injury could include depression, anxiety, lack of attachment, psychosis, fear of abandonment, fear of impending death, etc. Mental injury can also be caused by the omission of affection and other basic emotions.

Child Neglect – Includes *physical neglect* (not providing reasonable food, clothing and shelter); *failure to protect* (knowingly allowing another person to abuse or neglect a child); *improper supervision* (placing the child in danger); *abandonment* (leaving a child without an agreement for the child's safety); and *medical neglect* (harm from failure to seek or obtain medical care).



How to Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect

Your Important Role in Safeguarding Our Children

You Are Important!

Children are our greatest treasure. As adults, we have a special responsibility to safeguard children against abuse and neglect. Ultimately, it's better to prevent child abuse *before it happens* than to repair the damage afterwards. But we need your help.

This brochure is designed to help you become part of the "prevention solution." You'll learn how to guard against child abuse, how to spot the danger signs, and what to do if you suspect abuse is happening. You don't need to be an expert. All you need is a caring heart and the desire to help. For more information, call us at (269) 552-4430 or visit www.KalamazooCAN.com.

Facts and Figures

Every day, on average, 13 new cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in Kalamazoo County. One-fourth of those new cases demand immediate intervention. That translates into 1,140 *confirmed* and serious cases each year, throughout our area.¹ Unfortunately, many more cases are never reported.

Who is affected? Boys and girls, teens and toddlers – even babies. All races and ethnic groups, from the inner city to affluent suburbs. Simply put, every child is vulnerable to abuse. The good news is that we can reduce the danger by *working together*.

Kalamazoo CAN
420 E. Alcott
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Phone: (269) 552-4430
Visit us online at:
www.KalamazooCAN.com

Source:¹ 2009 Kids Count Data Book, Annie E. Casey Foundation. To learn more, visit www.KalamazooCAN.com.

Source:² Adapted from the 2008 Mandated Reporter's Resource Guide, Michigan Department of Children's Protective Services. Note: These are not the full legal definitions. Please download the report at www.KalamazooCAN.com for more detailed information.

7 Easy Ways to Help

Preventing child abuse isn't "rocket science." You don't need an advanced degree or professional training to make a difference. Here are seven simple ways you can get started today!

- 1 Teach your younger children the names of their body parts. Let them know that the body parts that are typically covered by a swimsuit are "private" parts.
- 2 Think carefully about where your children spend most of their time. Help them identify one or two trustworthy adults in each place to whom they can turn for help if they feel threatened or uneasy. Let those adults know that they are designated "go to" people. Help your children understand safe vs. unsafe settings.
- 3 Talk regularly with your children about all aspects of their safety, from crossing the street or being home alone to avoiding bullies and strangers.
- 4 Take care of yourself so you can be a good caregiver. We live in very stressful times and raising children is a big job. Have a pre-arranged plan for what to do when you find yourself becoming angry or upset.
- 5 Support educational programs at your local school or church to teach children about the difference between "good touch" and "bad touch." Become a member of KalamazooCAN (details on our website).
- 6 Get to know your neighbors. Encourage a friendly, supportive spirit among parents in the area. If a parent appears to be struggling, offer reassurance and support, or just a friendly ear for listening.
- 7 Be a friend to a child you know. Remember their names and show them you care. Pay attention to the children around you, even if they aren't yours.

For more information and prevention tips, visit us at www.KalamazooCAN.com. Or call (269) 552-4430.

Warning Signs

Every parent knows that raising a child can be difficult at times. No one ever achieves "perfection" when it comes to parenting. On the other hand, there's a big difference between normal parenting mistakes and serious abuse or neglect. Here are some common warning signs that abuse or neglect *may* be happening.³

Warning Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained bruises, welts or cuts
- A pattern of injuries over time
- Fearful behavior by the child
- Caregivers who are physically abusive or often angry
- Inappropriate child clothing, which may be used by the child or caregiver to hide signs of injury

Warning Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Excessively fearful or shy behavior
- Persistent anti-social behavior (e.g., very aggressive)
- Children who constantly try to "parent" other kids
- Regression – older children acting much younger
- Harsh, belittling or manipulative caregiver behavior

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- An STD or pregnancy before age 14
- Stained, bloody or torn underclothes
- Injury to the genital area
- Children who have age-inappropriate knowledge about sex or interest in sexual acts
- Extreme passive or aggressive behavior
- Self-destructive behavior such as substance abuse, self-mutilation or suicide attempts
- Caregivers who limit the child's contact with others

Warning Signs of Neglect:

- Chronically bad hygiene, such as very dirty or matted hair, persistent body odor, etc.
- Poorly fitting clothes that are dirty and disheveled
- Children who appear to be unsupervised
- Substance abuse or reckless disregard by caregivers

Report Child Abuse

If you have a reasonable suspicion about a case of child abuse or neglect, please take action by calling Kalamazoo County Child Protective Services at the number below. All calls are completely confidential.

Kalamazoo CPS: (269) 337-5046

Reasonable suspicion of abuse can be based on:

- Witnessing the abuse yourself
- Noticing the warning signs of abuse in a child
- When an adult, parent or child confides in you

If a child confides in you, remember "**R.O.L.E.**" First, **R**eassure the child that it was the right thing to tell you. **O**vercome the desire to over-react or talk negatively about the abuser. **L**isten, don't lead the conversation. **E**ncourage the child by saying you *will* help them. Then follow through by calling the number above.



Join Us!

The mission of Kalamazoo CAN is to safeguard our children from abuse and neglect through advocacy, education and outreach at all levels of society in greater Kalamazoo County, Michigan. We invite you to join us in this important and ongoing effort by becoming a Kalamazoo CAN member (*see our website for details*).

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Source: ³ Adapted from "Prevent Child Abuse" by Jamie Littlefield. To learn more, please visit www.KalamazooCAN.com.
Note: The warning signs above do not necessarily indicate child abuse or neglect. Use great care and never jump to conclusions