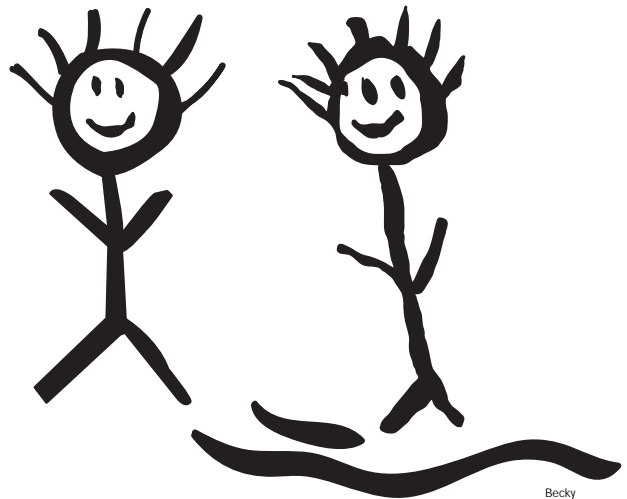


# How You Can Help

There is a lot **you** can do in your community to help prevent child abuse.

## You can:

1. Know the warning signs of abuse, and report it.
2. Be a nurturing parent.
3. Reach out to your neighbors.
4. Take part in prevention efforts.
5. Help strengthen your community.
6. Protect your child from abuse.



Becky  
Age 12

1. **Know the warning signs of abuse, and report it.**

## **Children who are abused may show physical and behavioral signs**

### **Abused children may seem:**

- \* Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults
- \* Tired a lot, or they may complain of nightmares or not sleeping well
- \* Reluctant to go home (*coming to school early or staying late, for example*)
- \* Fearful and anxious
- \* Very passive and withdrawn – or aggressive and disruptive



Danielle  
Age 12

## 1. Know the warning signs of abuse, and report it.

# Abused children may also show sudden changes in behavior or school performance.

### *Some signs of physical abuse:*

- ✦ unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes or other injuries
- ✦ apparent fear of a parent or caretaker
- ✦ faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school

### *Some signs of sexual abuse:*

- ✦ difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area
- ✦ sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age
- ✦ running away from home

### *Some signs of emotional abuse:*

- ✦ acting overly mature or immature for the child's age
- ✦ extreme changes in behavior
- ✦ delays in physical or emotional development
- ✦ attempted suicide
- ✦ lack of emotional attachment to the parent

### *Some signs of neglect:*

- ✦ missing school a lot
- ✦ begging for or stealing money or food
- ✦ lacking needed medical or dental care
- ✦ being frequently dirty
- ✦ using alcohol or other drugs
- ✦ saying there is no one at home to take care of him or her

*(These signs don't prove that a child is being abused. But they could be a signal that the child and his or her family need help.)*

### *Also, know the signs of an abusive adult. Consider the possibility of abuse if a parent or caretaker:*

- ✦ seems unconcerned about the child's welfare at school or at home
- ✦ denies problems at school or at home – or blames the child for them
- ✦ sees the child as worthless or as a burden
- ✦ avoids discussing the child's injuries, or gives conflicting explanations for them
- ✦ abuses alcohol or other drugs
- ✦ seems isolated from other parents and school, and community activities
- ✦ uses harsh physical discipline or asks other caretakers to use it
- ✦ depends on the child for emotional support
- ✦ seems indifferent to the child
- ✦ seems secretive or tries to isolate the child from other children
- ✦ frequently blames, belittles or insults the child

*(These signs don't prove that an adult is an abuser. But they could be a signal that the adult and his or her family need help.)*

## 1. Know the warning signs of abuse, and report it.

# If you suspect abuse, report it - it's the right thing to do.

### Reporting abuse could save a life.

Children die every day from injuries caused by child abuse. Often, someone was aware of the abuse, but didn't report it.

### Abusive families need help.

Reporting abuse can help connect families with counseling and services. This may help relieve a family's stress – and prevent future abuse.

### The cycle of abuse can be stopped.

Victims of abuse who receive counseling and treatment are less likely to become abusers or have other problems as they grow up.

### It may be your legal responsibility.

Most states have laws requiring anyone who works with children (*teachers, nurses, social workers, doctors, etc.*) to report abuse.

## Some questions and answers about reporting abuse

### Who should I report to?

Call your state's child protective services agency. (*You can call and not give your name.*) Check your phone book or call the **Childhelp USA** National Child Abuse Hotline at **1.800.4.A.CHILD** (1.800.422.4453).

### What happens when a report is made?

The process varies from state to state. In general:

- ✿ An investigator may visit the home and interview the child, the parents or other caretakers.
- ✿ The investigator helps determine whether the child is being abused or at risk for abuse.
- ✿ The case may be referred to social services or to juvenile, family or criminal court.

### How will the child be protected?

If abuse is occurring in the home:

- ✿ The child may be temporarily removed from the home.
- ✿ He or she may go to live with relatives or a foster family.
- ✿ The family may be required to seek counseling or other services to help prevent future abuse.

*(If the parents don't cooperate with these requirements, they could risk losing custody of the child permanently.)*

### Will the abuser be punished?

It depends. Often, the goal is to help the abuser break the cycle of abuse, so the family can stay together. In some cases, the abuser may face criminal charges.

### I reported abuse, and nothing happened.

#### What else can I do?

Keep in mind that you may not have the legal right to know what steps were taken to protect the child. If you are still concerned about the child, you can help in other ways:

- ✿ Talk to the child's teacher, a school counselor or a leader of the family's faith community. They may be in a position to reach out to the family.
- ✿ Offer support to the family, if it's appropriate. Offer to help with child care, chores, etc.
- ✿ Be kind and supportive to any child you suspect is being abused or neglected at home.

And, keep reporting the abuse until the situation is resolved.

## 2. Be a nurturing parent.

### Are you a nurturing parent?

Take an honest look at yourself and your relationship with your child.

- ✦ Do you hit your child or use other physical discipline?
- ✦ Do you find yourself yelling at your child a lot?
- ✦ Are you worried that you might hurt your child?

If so, take steps to improve your relationship with your child.

### Are you overwhelmed by stress?

Problems such as unemployment, marital tension or a child with special needs can add to family tension. If you think stress may be affecting the way you treat your child, seek help.

## Build a positive relationship with your child.

Help your child feel loved and secure.

- ✦ Make sure your child knows you love him or her, even when he or she did something wrong.
- ✦ Encourage your child instead of criticizing. Praise his or her achievements and talents.
- ✦ Spend time with your child. Do things together that you both enjoy.

Seek help if you need it. If things seem out of control or you are worried that you may hurt your child:

Talk to someone.

Tell a friend, health-care provider or a leader in your faith community about your concerns. Or join a self-help group for parents.

*(See page 20 for a full list of resources)*

Get counseling.

Individual or family counseling can help you learn healthy ways to communicate with each other.

Take a parenting class.

Nobody was born knowing how to be a good parent. Parenting classes can give you the skills you need to raise a happy, healthy child.

Accept help.

You don't have to "do it all." Accept offers of help from friends, family or neighbors. And don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

### 3. Reach out to your neighbors.

## Build a support network by getting involved in your community.

### When neighbors can rely on each other, everyone benefits.

#### Get to know your neighbors.

Develop friendly relationships with your neighbors and their children. Problems often seem less overwhelming when you have support nearby.

#### Get involved in your child's school.

Join the parent-teacher organization and attend school events.

#### Be an active community member.

Attend town meetings and community events. Join groups that are working to improve your community.

#### Know where to get help.

Many schools and communities offer programs that support parents and children. Find out what services are available for you and your neighbors.

#### Be a good neighbor.

#### Reach out to families and children in your community.

#### Help families under stress.

If a family you know seems to be in crisis or under stress, offer to help. For example, you could:

- ✿ offer to baby-sit
- ✿ help with chores and errands
- ✿ suggest resources that can help the family

#### Be kind to children.

Get to know the children in your neighborhood. Be kind and supportive to any child – especially if his or her family is under stress.

**\* Remember, if you think a child is being abused, report it. Reporting abuse can help protect the child and get the family help.**

*(See page 20 for a full list of resources)*

#### 4. Take part in prevention efforts.

## Learn how your community supports children and families. A range of programs and services may be available.

### Parent education programs

teach parents about child development and parenting skills.

### Family support centers

provide services such as parenting education, social networking, self-help groups or child-care relief.

### Home-visiting programs

provide social support, education and crisis intervention to families at risk for abuse.

### Substance abuse treatment programs

can help parents overcome problems with alcohol or other drugs.

### Well-baby programs

provide health and education services to new parents.

### Child-care programs

offer affordable child-care services. This may allow parents to maintain full-time jobs or stay in school while keeping their children safe.

### Respite care

provides relief to families with a child or other family member who is ill or has a disability.

### Parent mentor programs

match experienced, stable parents with parents at risk for abuse. Mentors provide support and model positive parenting skills.

**\* *These programs may be offered through schools, health-care clinics, social service agencies or community organizations.***

*(See page 20 to find out about specific programs, or look in your phone book.)*

#### 4. Take part in prevention efforts.

## Learn how you can take part in prevention efforts.

### Volunteer to support children and families. For example:

- ✦ Become a parent mentor and serve as a role model for a new parent.
- ✦ Get trained as a respite care provider and help families with special-needs children.
- ✦ Volunteer at a parent resource center and help families get the support they need.
- ✦ Help a community organization with office work, newsletters, mailings, fundraising, events planning, etc.

### Make a donation.

Most charitable contributions are tax deductible – and they support efforts to help families.

- ✦ If you can, donate money to an organization that works to prevent child abuse.  
([www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org))
- ✦ Donate clothing, food or toys to a social service agency that helps families in your community.

### Become an advocate.

Speak out against child abuse. Contact your elected officials. Ask them to support funding for prevention efforts and policies that support children and families

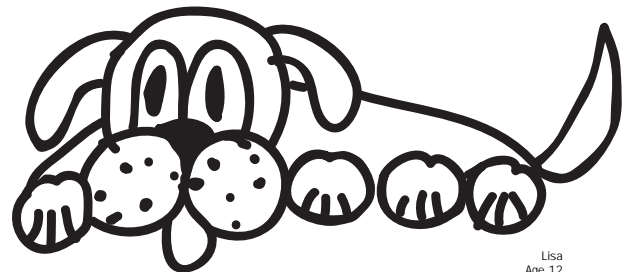
(Go to [www.capwiz.com/pca](http://www.capwiz.com/pca) for details)

### Raise awareness.

Talk to your friends and neighbors about child abuse and how to prevent it. Help local organizations distribute educational materials on parenting and child abuse.

### Join a coalition to prevent child abuse.

Help guide your community's efforts to prevent child abuse. Team up with individuals and organizations who are working to prevent child abuse, and strengthen their efforts.



Lisa  
Age 12

## 5. Help strengthen your community.

# More steps you can take to strengthen your community.

### Support local efforts to help families.

Organize a fundraiser or a food drive to support an organization that helps families in your community.

### Help the public library develop resources for parents.

Work with the librarian to develop a collection of resources on child development and parenting skills.

### Work to prevent all violence.

Join – or start – a group that works to prevent crime and violence in your community. Send a message that no violence will be tolerated in your community.

### Work with schools.

Encourage your local schools to develop programs that prevent violence and abuse.

### Get involved.

Keep in touch with your child's school. Find out what the school is doing to prevent violence and abuse – and how you can help.

### Support your school's efforts.

Voice your support and donate your time or resources for programs that:

- ✿ teach children how to protect themselves from abuse;
- ✿ give adolescents the knowledge they need to be nurturing parents someday;
- ✿ teach parenting skills to teen parents;
- ✿ work to prevent bullying, harassment and fighting in the schools;
- ✿ provide before- and after-school activities to keep children safe; and
- ✿ provide affordable meals or other assistance for children and families.

These programs help prevent child abuse by educating children and supporting families.

*\* You don't have to be a parent to get involved. Call your local school to find out how you can help.*

## 6. Protect your child from abuse.

# You can help prevent child abuse.

### Teach your child self-protection skills.

- ✿ Make sure your child knows how to stay safe in public places.
- ✿ Teach your child about “good touches” and “bad touches.”
- ✿ Tell your child to say no, get away, and tell you right away if anyone tries to touch him or her.
- ✿ Abusers often tell their victims to keep it a “secret.” Make sure your child understands that it’s OK to tell these kinds of “secrets.”

### Be alert to signs of abuse

If your child tells you about being abused or you see other warning signs:

- ✿ Assure your child that he or she did nothing wrong and that you believe him or her.
- ✿ Take steps to protect your child from the suspected abuser.
- ✿ Get medical attention for your child, if you think it is required.
- ✿ Report the abuse to the police or sheriff.
- ✿ Seek counseling for your child, again, if you think it is required.