

Children's Mental Health Waiver Family Care Coordinator Primer on Child Protection September 2007

This document is considered a REFERENCE TOOL for Family Care Coordinators to increase their knowledge relating to child abuse/neglect and investigation processes.

This document and information is not meant to be used to facilitate the abuse/neglect training required by the waiver program. The abuse/neglect training should focus on the child/youth being served utilizing the age appropriate training guides provided by the waiver program. The purpose of the training is to provide an opportunity for discussion in hopes of opening the lines of communication if a child/youth encounters situations they are uncomfortable with.

The protection of Wyoming's children is everyone's responsibility.

The problem and solution to child abuse lie within each Wyoming community.

What are the Child's Rights

- Physical care with food, clothing, shelter, and education to meet basic needs
- Emotional security, the sense that he or she will not be abandoned or neglected
- Be with his or her parents and brothers and sisters, unless there are legal grounds for removing the child
- Diagnosis and treatment for medical and emotional problems
- Protection and freedom from harm, danger, injury, and neglect
- Be represented by his or her own court-appointed guardian during any court proceedings

What is Child Abuse and Neglect?

Definitions

<u>Physical abuse</u> – deliberate physical injuries inflicted by parents, caretaker, or baby-sitter or physical injuries resulting from indifference, negligence, or improper supervision.

<u>Sexual abuse</u> – any sexual exploitation of a child (molestation, exposure, masturbation, incest, oral-genital contact) by parents, caretakers, or other persons living in the home.

Emotional abuse – continual scapegoating and rejection of a child resulting in behavior clearly indicative of pathologically disturbed emotional adjustment or behavior Psychological abuse – child rearing procedures or the absence of them which results in the gross impairment of a child's opportunity for normal psychological development Family violence and abuse – abuse of the intimate, trusting and safe relationship that a family should provide and can manifest itself in other forms of abuse defined here.

Neglect – failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child under 18 with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection, and supervision.

Medical care neglect – refusal or failure to obtain and maintain treatment services necessary for a child's continued health.

Understanding the Causes – Most parents don't hurt or neglect their children intentionally. Many were themselves abused or neglected. Very young or inexperienced parents might not know how to take care of their babies or what they can reasonably expect from children at different stages of development. Circumstances that place families under extraordinary stress – for instance, poverty, divorce, sickness, disability – sometimes take their toll in child maltreatment. Parents who abuse alcohol or other drugs are more likely to abuse and neglect their children.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect – Signs and Symptoms

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect.

The presence of a single sign in any of these categories does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

Signs in the Child

- Shows sudden changes in behavior and school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems or difficulties concentrating that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision, especially as it relates to parental responsibilities to a child
- Is overly compliant, passive or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home

Signs in the Parent

- Shows little concern for the child and the child's overall wellbeing
- Denies the existence of or blames the child for the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs

Signs in the Parent and Child

- Rarely touch or look at each other
- Consider their relationship entirely negative
- State that they do not like each other

Physical Abuse

Physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe <u>fractures</u> or death) as a result of pinching, <u>beating</u>, <u>kicking</u>, <u>biting</u>, <u>shaking</u>, <u>throwing</u>, <u>stabbing</u>, <u>choking</u>, <u>hitting</u> (with hand, <u>stick</u>, <u>strap</u>, <u>or other object</u>), burning or otherwise harming a child. (Items identified with <u>underline</u> are considered "major" physical injuries by DFS – others are very important but level of severity would be a consideration in many cases.) Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Signs in the Child

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, (report immediately before bruise fades) broken bones, or black eyes – most often on the face, torso, buttocks, back or thighs
 - Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
 - Bruises or welts reflect shape of object used (electric cord, belt buckle)
 - Burns are often on palms, soles of feet, buttocks, and back and reflect pattern indicative of cigarette, cigar, electrical appliance, or rope burn
 - Fractures or dislocations often involve the skull, ribs, and bones around joints and may be multiple or spiral in type

Some of these injuries can depend on the age of the child.

- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact with adults especially parents
- Reguests or feels deserving of punishment
- Suggests that other children should be punished in harsh manner
- Cries excessively or sits and stares
- Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Signs in the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for child's injury (immediate reporting)
- Describes the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child

Sexual Abuse

Includes activities by a parent or caretaker such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Children typically do not have the experience or vocabulary to accurately describe adult sexual activity. Verbal threats and coercion are frequently used to force children to participate and keep the abuse secret.

The presence of a single sign does not prove sexual abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

Signs in the Child

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Signs in the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

Emotional Abuse

A pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, rejection, as well as withholding love, support or guidance. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms of abuse are identified. The signs of emotional abuse may be less obvious than other forms of maltreatment, which makes it harder to substantiate. Emotional abuse is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behavior or chronic physical complaints that cannot be explained medically or circumstantially.

Signs in the Child

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing emotional abuse:

Physical indicators:

- Eating disorders
- Inappropriate wetting or soiling
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Crying all the time
- Failure to thrive (for DFS, this focuses more on physical condition)
- Speech disorders, stuttering
- Asthma, severe allergies, or gastrointestinal ulcers
- Delayed in physical or emotional development

Behavioral indicators:

- Poor peer relationships
- Behavioral extremes, overly complaint demanding; withdrawn aggressive
- Physically acting out as a way of attention seeking
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children for example) or inappropriately infantile (habit disorders, such as chronic biting, rocking, head banging, thumb sucking in an older child)
- Chronic academic underachievement
- Sad appearance
- Apathy/lack of responsiveness
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent
- Craves attention from strangers
- Lack of physical boundaries

Signs in the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Family violence and abuse

The effects on children who witness family violence may include:

- Feelings of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame, despair, and distrust
- Sense of powerlessness
- Physical reactions such as stomach cramps, headaches, sleeping and eating difficulties, frequent illness
- Slowed developmental capacities such as poor school performance, low selfesteem, difficulty relating to peers
- Substance abuse
- Missed appointments
- Behavioral problems such as running away from home, aggressive language and behavior
- Learning that violence is a legitimate means to obtain control of a situation or for resolving conflict

Ways to reach out to children affected by family violence:

- Tell them that the violence is not their fault
- Give them an opportunity to talk about the violence
- Help make a safety plan which they can follow
- Let them know that others have had similar experiences
- Support and assist the abused parent to protect both him/herself and the children
- Contact and discuss the situation with a DFS Child Protection Worker to obtain information about available resources and programs

<u>Neglect</u>

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs and may be:

- Physical failure to provide necessary food/shelter or lack of appropriate supervision
- Medical failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment
- Educational failure to educate child or attend to special education needs
- Emotional inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs

These situations do not always mean a child is neglected. Sometimes, cultural values, the standards of care in the community, and poverty may be contributing factors – indicating the family is in need of information and assistance.

Signs in the Child

- Poor school attendance frequent tardiness
- Falling asleep in school lethargic
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or money
- Height and weight significantly below age level
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Chronic hunger

- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- Repeated acts of vandalism
- Running away from home
- States that there is no one at home to provide care
- Assumes adult responsibilities

Signs in the Parent or Other Adult Caregiver

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Listen to the Child

There may be times when children or adolescents tell you, directly or indirectly, about abuse in their family. Remember how difficult it is for children to talk about their abuse, especially as they may think it will get them in trouble. It is very important for you to handle their disclosure with sensitivity.

In talking with children, it will be helpful if you:

- Provide a private time and place to talk
- **Do not promise not to tell** providers are mandatory reporters and the fact that this cannot be done cannot be emphasized enough.
- Do not express shock or criticize their family
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling
- Tell them that the abuse is not their fault, that they are not bad or to blame
- Determine their immediate need for safety
- Let them know that you are required by law to report the abuse
- Let them know what will happen when you report
- Report the abuse to the Department of Family Services or local law enforcement
- Use their vocabulary to discuss body parts

Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Wyoming Statute

Title 14, Article 3, Section 202 states:

(ii) "Abuse" means inflicting or causing physical or mental injury, harm of imminent danger to the physical or mental health or welfare of a child other than by accidental means, including abandonment, excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment, malnutrition or substantial risk thereof by reason of intentional or unintentional neglect, and the commission or allowing the commission of a sexual offense against a child as defined by law."

Who must report

EVERY PERSON, private citizen or professional in Wyoming who has reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship with the child or family, is immune from reporting suspected abuse. A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

A report of suspected child abuse is a responsible attempt to protect a child.

When to report

FOLLOW WAIVER PROVIDER PROCEDURE FOR NOTICE OF INCIDENT REPORTING

A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation. A request for investigation should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adolescent has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused. The person making the request for investigation does not need to prove the abuse. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibility of Department of Family Services - Child Protective Services personnel or law enforcement personnel. To assist in their efforts, provide specific information. Investigations will not be done on "bad feelings" about a situation.

How to report

FOLLOW WAIVER PROVIDER PROCEDURE FOR NOTICE OF INCIDENT REPORTING

A request for investigation can be made to any county office of the Department of Family Services (contact numbers attached). For immediate response, law enforcement should be contacted. After hours- call 911.

What to report

FOLLOW WAIVER PROVIDER PROCEDURE FOR NOTICE OF INCIDENT REPORTING

When reporting suspected abuse, the following information will be requested:

- Name, age, and gender of child and other family members
- Address (provide street and house/apartment number), phone numbers and/or directions to the child's home
- Parents place of employment
- Description of suspected abuse
- Current condition of the child

What happens to the report

A Child Protection Services (CPS) Worker from Department of Family Services investigates the report of suspected abuse.

During the investigation, the CPS Worker routinely:

- Checks for other reports of abuse or neglect
- Talks face to face with the child involved
- Observes the child for injuries or signs of abuse or neglect
- Observes the child's home and where the alleged abuse/neglect took place
- Talks face to face with the child's parents
- Talks face to face with any other person alleged to have abused or neglected the child

Sometimes, the CPS Worker may also:

- Talk with other people who know about the child's care, such as doctors, teachers, other relatives (you may help identify people who should be talked with)
- Interview and observe other children in the home
- Arrange for medical or psychological examination of the child

What happens after the investigation

Within 60 days after the report is received, the investigation will result in one of the following conclusions:

- Abuse or neglect is unsubstantiated and DFS will no longer be involved with the family
- Abuse or neglect is substantiated and classified as low, moderate, or high risk

- Low risk situations are usually resolved by an offer of services
- Moderate or high risk cases typically require intervention services, sometimes involving the juvenile court and possible use of foster care

In confirmed cases, a service plan is developed to prevent the recurrence of abuse to the child. When appropriate, findings are reported to the District Attorney for possible legal action.

Available Resources

Department of Family Services Field Offices May 2006

County	City	Phone (307)	Fax (307)
Albany	Laramie	745-7324	742-8848
Big Horn	Greybull	765-9453	765-2330
	Lovell	548-6503	None
Campbell	Gillette	682-7277	686-1889
Carbon	Rawlins	328-0612	328-2801
Converse	Douglas	358-3138	358-4238
	Glenrock	436-9068	None
Crook	Sundance	283-2014	283-1606
Fremont	Lander	332-4038	332-4806
	Riverton	856-6521	856-7937
Goshen	Torrington	532-2191	532-4666
Hot Springs	Thermopolis	864-2158	864-2651
Johnson	Buffalo	684-7281	684-7966
Laramie	Cheyenne	777-7921	777-5190
Lincoln	Kemmerer	877-6670	877-4332
	Afton	886-9232	886-3101
Natrona	Casper	473-3900	473-3967
Niobrara	Lusk	334-2153	None
Park	Cody	587-6246	527-7183
	Powell	754-2245	None
Platte	Wheatland	322-3790	322-4125
Sheridan	Sheridan	672-2404	672-8948
Sublette	Pinedale	367-4124	367-6774
Sweetwater	Rock Springs	382-5916	382-5917
Teton	Jackson	733-7757	733-0082
Uinta	Evanston	789-2756	789-2165
Washakie	Worland	347-6181	347-6184
Weston	Newcastle	746-4657	746-2588

After Hours - call 911

Wyoming Domestic Violence Advocates and Support Contacts May 2006

Location	Program	Phone
Statewide	Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic	1-800-990-3877
	Violence	
	Attorney General Victim Services	1-307-777-7200
	Civil Legal Assistance for Victims	1-800-990-3877
	Wyoming Crime Victims Center	1-888-707-8979
Albany County	Laramie Victim Assistance Program	1-307-721-5315
	SAFE Project	1-307-745-3556
Big Horn County	C.A.R.E.S. (Basin)	1-307-568-3334
	C.A.R.E.S. (Lovell)	1-307-548-2330
Campbell County	County Attorney's Advocate	1-307-682-4310
	Gillette Abuse Refuge Foundation	1-307-686-8070
Carbon County	Citizens Organized to see Violence End	1-866-889-2683
•	(COVE)	
Converse County	Converse County Attorney Advocate	1-307-358-5020
-	Converse County Coalition	1-307-358-4800
Crook County	Family Violence Services	1-307-283-1225
Fremont County	Fremont Alliance	1-307-856-4734
<u>.</u>	Riverton Police Dept. Victim Advocate	1-307-856-4891
	Victim/Witness Program (Lander)	1-307-332-1161
	Victim/Witness Program (Riverton)	1-307-857-3653
Goshen County	County Task Force	1-307-532-2118
•	Victim Assistance Program	1-307-532-4428
Hot Springs County	HOPE Agency	1-877-288-4673
Johnson County	Family Crisis Center	1-800-684-2030
Laramie County	Safehouse	1-307-637-7233
Lincoln County	Turning Point	1-307-877-9209
Natrona County	Self Help Center	1-307-235-2814
Niobrara County	Helpmate Crisis Center	1-307-334-2608
Park County	Crisis Intervention Services	1-877-864-9688
Platte County	Project SAFE	1-307-322-4794
Sheridan County	Advocacy and Resource Center	1-307-672-3222
Sublette County	SAFV Task Force	1-888-301-4435
Sweetwater County	YWCA Support and Safe House	1-307-352-1030
Teton County	Community Safety Network	1-307-733-7233
Uinta County	Sexual Assault and Family Violence	1-307-789-7315
Washakie County	Victims of Violence Center	1-307-347-4991
Weston County	FOCUS	1-307-746-3630
Wind River Indian Reservation	Domestic Violence Program	1-800-803-8596
Joint Tribal Council		