

# Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

## ***What is Child Maltreatment?***

- ✓ Child maltreatment can be defined as a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child inflicted by a parent or caretaker. Child abuse includes non-accidental:
- ✓ **Physical Abuse** - Examples of physical abuse include, but are not limited to: beating, harmful restraint, use of a weapon or instrument, or actions that result in or could result in serious physical injury.
- ✓ **Sexual Abuse** - Sexual abuse is any sexual behavior imposed on a juvenile. This involves a range of activities, including fondling the genital area, masturbation, oral sex, or vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or other object. It includes exhibitionism, child pornography, and suggestive behaviors or comments.
- ✓ **Emotional Abuse** - Emotional abuse is expressing attitudes or behaviors toward a child that create serious emotional or psychological damage.
- ✓ **Neglect** - Child neglect can be defined as any serious disregard for a juvenile's supervision, care, or discipline.

## ***How to Make a Report***

You can make a report of child abuse by calling, writing, or visiting the Durham County Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services, 220 E. Main St., Durham, NC 27702-0810; **919-560-8424** or by calling **1-800-CHILDREN** or **1-919-733-2580**. After hours, you should **call 911**. A social worker will listen to you and take down all the information you give.

It is helpful if you can share the following information:

- ✓ the name, address, and age of the child
- ✓ the name and address of the child's parent, guardian, or caretaker
- ✓ the child's condition, including the nature and extent of the injury
- ✓ are there other children living in the home, their names, and their ages
- ✓ any information regarding the presence of weapons, alcohol/drug abuse, or other factors affecting the social worker's safety are important

### **Important:**

- You do not need to prove that abuse has taken place; you only need reasonable grounds for suspicion.
- You do not have to give your name.
- You do not need permission from parents or caregivers to make a report and you do not need to tell them you are reporting.
- You do not need permission from your workplace to make a report, but there may be guidelines to help you.

## ***What Happens After a Report Has Been Made?***

Children are seldom removed permanently from their homes. If Child Protective Services decides to investigate the case, they must initiate an

investigation within 24 hours for abuse and within 72 hours in cases of suspected neglect. A full assessment will be made to determine future actions involving the child and the family. Help may be provided to the family in the form of counseling, referrals to other helping agencies, emergency foster care services, intensive in-home services, and/or help with housing, finances, medical needs, and child care.

## ***When a Child Discloses***

When a child tells you that he or she has been maltreated, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry, and powerless. You may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, or disbelief. It is important for you to remain calm and in control of your feelings in front of the child. Reassure them that you will try to help keep them safe.

You can show your care and concern by:

- listening carefully to what the child is saying
- telling the child that you believe them
- telling the child that the abuse was not their fault
- letting the child know that you will make a report to help stop the abuse

You will not be helping the child if you:

- make promises that you can't keep, such as promising not to tell anyone
- push the child to give you details about the abuse (your role is to listen to what the child wants to tell you)
- ask direct questions of the child (this might interfere with the investigation)
- discuss what the child told you with others who are not directly involved with helping the child