



Understanding and Preventing Physical and Sexual Abuse

Abuse can happen to anyone – it happens to both ADULTS and to CHILDREN.



What is physical abuse?

- Physical abuse happens when someone hurts you on purpose in ways that cause injury or pain.
- Physical abuse includes things such as hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, biting, choking, throwing, and shoving.

What is sexual abuse?

- Sexual abuse happens when someone touches you in ways or places that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual contact—including unwanted sexual touching of any kind.

What is sexual abuse? (continued)

- Sexual contact with a person who does not understand what is happening is also sexual abuse.
- If someone makes you take off your clothes, or takes pictures of you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, that can also be sexual abuse.

If you have a developmental disability, you are at special risk of abuse because:

- You may depend on others to help with your personal physical needs—like bathing and dressing.
- You also may have trouble:
 - Understanding what is happening to you right away, or
 - Making others understand that you have been abused.

You can be abused by a stranger or by someone you know.

- It is sometimes hard to tell whether or not you are being abused.
- If you feel uncomfortable with the way someone is treating you, you should **tell someone you trust!**

Sometimes people who are being abused don't tell anyone.

- They may not tell because they are afraid, or don't know what words to use.



You can have good reasons to believe that someone is being abused.

- Someone who is being abused may:
 - Act upset for a long time
 - Change their behavior or mood
 - Seem frightened of people or places
 - Become violent
 - Not want to talk to anyone.

Here are some signs of physical abuse.

- Reasons to believe that someone is being physically abused include:
 - Unexplained injuries or bruises
 - A person harming himself, or herself
 - Aggressive behavior
 - Problems at school or work
 - Depression

Here are some signs of sexual abuse.

- Reasons to believe that someone is being sexually abused include:
 - Bruises around breasts or genital areas
 - Unexplained sexual infections
 - Torn, stained, or bloody clothing
 - Nightmares and bed wetting
 - Self-injury
 - Fear of sexuality

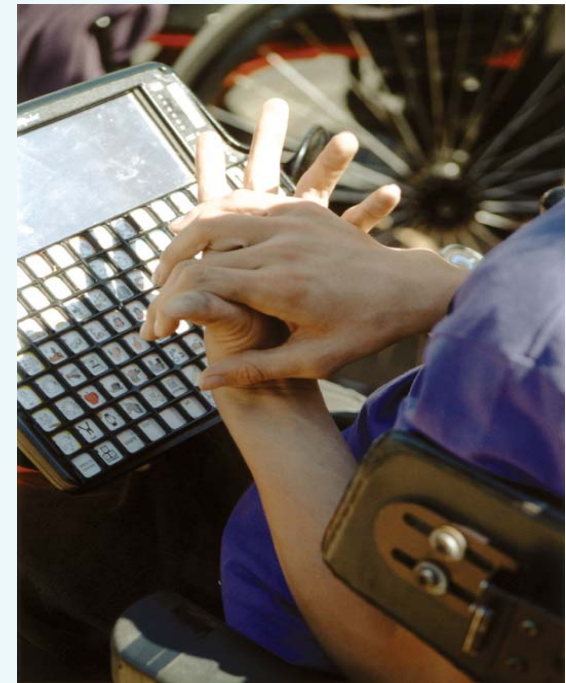
You can have other good reasons to believe that someone has been abused.

- It is important to understand that everyone deals with abuse in their own way.

If you think you are being abused,
or that someone else is, you need to
TELL SOMEONE.

You can tell anyone who you
think will help you:

- A friend or family member
- A support professional
- A teacher
- A doctor
- Anyone you trust.



You can also help prevent abuse by making a report.

- If you have good reason to believe that someone is abusing a child, you can call the county Child Welfare Services agency.
- If you have good reason to believe that someone is abusing an adult, you can call the county Adult Protective Services agency.
- If you have good reason to believe that abuse is happening in a long-term care facility or nursing home, you can call the county Long Term Care Ombudsman.

Others can take steps to help prevent abuse, as well.



- The law says direct support professionals **must** report abuse they think is happening; this is called mandated reporting.
- Direct support professionals can help prevent abuse by learning how to look for the signs of abuse, and how to help.
- Your family members and direct support professionals can also help prevent abuse by talking about their challenges and the stresses in their lives.

You can find telephone numbers of professional helpers that you can call on this website by [clicking here](#).

- Remember, if you think you are being abused, or believe that someone you know is being abused, tell someone you trust or make a report!