

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

[WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW]

SBCV Kids Ministry Conference (2023)

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- **Child Abuse & Neglect Defined:** Virginia law defines an abused or neglected child as any child under 18 whose parent or other person responsible for the child's care:
 - a. Causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury
 - b. Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care
 - c. Abandons the child
 - d. Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.
 - e. Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person who is not related to the child by blood or marriage and who is required to register as a violent sexual offender.
 - f. An abused or neglected child includes a child who has been sex trafficked.
 - g. **Criteria for child abuse/neglect:**
 - i. Alleged victim is under 18
 - ii. Alleged abuser is in a caretaking role
 - iii. Alleged abuse/neglect meets Va CPS definitions
 - h. Categories of child abuse/neglect:
 - i. Physical Abuse/Neglect
 - ii. Mental Abuse/Neglect
 - iii. Sexual Abuse
- Signs & symptoms/common indicators of abuse and/or neglect (partial list!):
 - a. Unexplained changes in behavior or personality; anxious/withdrawn; uncharacteristically aggressive; lacks social skills/friends; poor bond/relationship with parent; knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age; running away/going missing; unexplained injuries; lack of hygiene/self-care; many more.
- Virginia Law
 - a. Jurisdiction: Child Protective Services/Department of Social Services
 - b. Mandated Reporters: legally responsible to report suspicions (childcare, ministers)
 - i. Report any suspicion to CPS where abuse occurred or where child resides
 - ii. Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline (800.552.7096)
 - iii. Mandated Reporter Portal (<https://vacps.dss.virginia.gov/VACPSWeb/>)
- How to handle: www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency
 - a. Be proactive (research/knowledge; CPS contacts; develop/provide protocols and training for volunteers/staff)
 - b. *Minimize the circle/respect privacy* (who needs to know?)
 - c. Don't investigate – simply report!

Any suspicion must be reported...it's the law!

Child Protective Services: www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps

Local Office Contact Info: www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency