

## WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT CHILD ABUSE?

- Children in the United States are more likely to be victimized in their own homes than on the streets. (*Current Trends in Child Abuse Prevention, Reporting, and Fatalities: The 2002 Fifty State Survey*. Chicago, IL: Prevent Child Abuse America, 2005)
- In 2005, 12 out of 1,000 children, up to the age of 18 years old in the United States were found to be victims of maltreatment. (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2007)
- A survey of adolescent boys' health revealed that one in eight high school boys had been physically and/or sexually abused. Sixty six percent of boys who reported physical abuse said it occurred at home. Of sexually abused boys, thirty five percent said the abuse happened at home. Forty eight percent of physically or sexually abused boys said they had not talked to anyone about their abuse, and only seven percent had discussed their abuse with a doctor. (*The Health of Adolescent Boys: Commonwealth Fund Survey Findings*. New York, NY: The Commonwealth Fund, 1998)
- One in five high school girls surveyed reported that she had been physically or sexually abused. Fifty three percent of the abuse occurred at home, and sixty five percent of the girls said it happened more than once. Twenty nine percent of the girls who had been physically or sexually abused had not told anyone about the abuse. Forty six percent of abused girls had symptoms of depression, which is more than twice the rate of girls who said that they had not been abused (eighteen percent). Abused girls are also at double risk for signs of eating disorders. (*The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*. New York, NY: The Commonwealth Fund, 1997)

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**1.866.751.7119**



*Program of*

### **Lutheran Community Services**

210 W. Sprague Ave., Spokane, WA 99201  
Tel: 866.751.7119 (24 Hours)  
Fax: 509.747.0690

### **Your Resource for Information and Assistance**

Spokane Crime Victim Service Center  
**1.866.751.7119**

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline  
**1.800.4.A.CHILD** or **1.800.422.4453**  
[www.childhelpusa.org](http://www.childhelpusa.org)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
**1.800.843.5678**  
[www.missingkids.org](http://www.missingkids.org)

National Center for Victims of Crime  
**1.800.FYI.CALL** or **1.800.394.2255**  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

National Children's Alliance Regional  
Children's Advocacy Centers  
**1.800.239.9950**  
[www.nca-online.org](http://www.nca-online.org)

National Runaway Switchboard  
**1.800.621.4000**

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center  
**1.800.627.6872**  
**TTY 1.877.712.9279**  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html)



Protecting the rights of crime victims



## SPOKANE CRIME VICTIM SERVICE CENTER

Your Resource for Information and Assistance

**CHILD ABUSE**  
*(for Teens Ages 12-16 Years)*

# WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

**C**hild abuse occurs when a parent, family member, or caretaker physically hurts a child or adolescent, makes that youth feel worthless, has sexual contact with him or her, or does not provide adequate food, care, or shelter. Child abuse can happen in all types of families, and in most cases, the abuser is related to the victim. Every state has laws against child abuse.

Child abuse isn't something that only happens to little kids. Some kids who are abused by their parents have been abused for as long as they can remember. For others, the abuse started when they got older. Almost half of the reported cases of child abuse and neglect involve teenagers.

Most people agree that acts that threaten a young person's life or cause serious injury are **physical abuse**. Some people disagree over the difference between spanking, which some see as an acceptable form of discipline, and a beating. When punishment is very severe or leaves bruises or other injuries, then it's no longer discipline—it's child abuse, and it should stop.

*All forms of child abuse, including emotional abuse, cause the victim pain and suffering.*

**Sexual abuse** occurs when an adult forces, threatens, or induces a young person into any kind of sexual contact. It includes direct physical contact and non touching sexual 'contact,' such as when a young person is persuaded to view obscene materials. Teenagers can be sexually abused by someone they know or by a stranger. They also can be abusers.

Always trust your feelings. If you become uncomfortable in a situation, assertively ask the person to stop or leave. Don't worry about hurting someone's feelings.

**Incest** is a form of sexual abuse that is defined as any sexual contact or behavior between family members. The most common form of incest occurs between an older family member—a parent, stepparent, uncle, or cousin—and a child or teenager. Incest can happen to girls or boys. The best way to stop incest is to tell someone.

**Emotional abuse** can include swearing at, yelling at, or insulting a young person, usually over and over again. It also can include denying a young person basic emotional needs, such as affection or security. Emotional abuse often accompanies physical and sexual abuse. Experts consider emotional abuse to be very serious, especially because victims feel bad about themselves.

**Criminal neglect** is when a parent does not provide care for a young person's safety and health—necessities like food, proper clothing, a place to live, or medical care. Leaving kids alone for long periods or kicking them out of the house also can be interpreted as neglect.

*Young people often blame themselves for the family crisis brought on by abuse, but it is not their fault.*

From time to time, all parents and children have problems, but most parents or adults do not abuse their children. Most parents who abuse their children love their children but never learned how to channel their anger, frustration, or sexual expressions in a mature and responsible ways.

Abuse and neglect affect the way young people view themselves and the rest of the world. Many people who were abused as children find it hard as adults to like themselves or to trust other people. As children, they learned to expect very little from adults except pain. They may find it hard to believe that people can really care about them.

Because of the long-term pain it produces, child abuse can leave a serious impact on communities. To deal with child abuse, we must recognize it and report it.

Reporting child abuse can be difficult, but it is the first step toward stopping it. Many teenagers who are abused feel the only thing they can do is run away from home, which can cause more harm than good.

Abuse can and should be reported to teachers, guidance counselors, or law enforcement officers. Reports also can be made to child protective services, a unit of government that usually can be found in a local social service agency.

If you feel things are not so great in our family, you might ask yourself, "Am I abused?" there's no easy answer for this. But if things in your life hurt or confuse you, it's a good idea to check it out with an adult you trust.

It is important to tell someone who can help you decide if there is abuse in your family. If you tell someone who does not believe or help you, tell someone else. It takes courage to ask for help, but if you are abused and you tell someone, things can change. In most cases, families in which abuse occurs get the help they need and the abuse can stop. You may never have a perfect family, but you can begin a life in which you are not hurt and abused.

*Your community has people who can help you.*