



Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse

Girl Scouts Heart of Central California | 6601 Elvas Avenue Sacramento, CA 95819 | www.girlscoutshcc.org

As a youth leader you have the responsibility to report known or suspected cases of child abuse. If you suspect that a child has been abused, report this information to the Child Protective Services in your county. (This number can be found in the white pages under County Government Offices.) This information should also be reported to your membership director.

An abused child is a child that is:

- Physically abused
- Sexually molested
- Emotionally starved
- Under constant verbal attack or torment
- Without proper food, clothing or shelter
- Left alone for long periods of time
- Regularly absent from school

Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

It is important that you, as a Girl Scout Leader, be able to recognize signs of child abuse in girls, if you notice these signs, you should follow council guidelines for reporting the information to the proper agency or authority.

If a girl tells you she has been abused:

- Believe what she has told you,
- Tell her it is not her fault,
- Tell her you are glad she told you about it,
- Tell her you are sorry about what happened, and
- Tell her you will do your best to protect and support her.

Don't take an "I don't want to get involved" attitude but, instead, realize that your willingness to get involved can make a real difference in a girl's life. In some instances it may even save a life. Unless someone or something intervenes, abused children can suffer emotional scars that last a lifetime.

Physical Abuse

- Frequently has unexplained injuries, bruises, or burns that are left untreated
- Fears receiving medical help
- Has bald spots (sign of hair pulling)
- Has abdominal swelling
- Avoids physical contact with others
- Wears clothing that covers arms and legs, even in hot weather
- Displays antisocial behavior (cheating, stealing, lying, etc.)

Sexual Abuse

- Has unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters
- Is extremely moody
- Has poor relationships with the opposite sex
- Exhibits overly aggressive behavior
- Cries easily
- Receives unexplained gifts or money
- Runs away from home often
- Has nightmares or insomnia
- Exhibits regressive behaviors such as bed wetting
- Has itching or pain in genital areas

Emotional Maltreatment

- Has a poor self-image
- Is easily upset when she makes mistakes
- Is often afraid to go home
- Fears new situations or changes
- Displays either extremely passive or extremely aggressive behavior
- May suffer from asthma, an ulcer, or severe allergies

Physical Neglect

- Wears clothes that are soiled, the wrong size, or torn
- Has poor hygiene
- Is often tired
- Is often hungry
- Craves attention
- Has infected sores or other skin infections
- Has a nervous habit such as rocking
- Displays destructive behavior
- Is often absent or late

More than one symptom is usually present in cases of child abuse. Note that the presence of any of the above signs does not necessarily mean that abuse has occurred.