The Impact of Family Violence On Children

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The Center For Family Safety And Healing is one of the first facilities in the country to bring together, under one roof, comprehensive intervention and prevention services, with long-term treatment and support for abused children and victims of domestic violence.
Agenda for our time together...

- Explanation of the center and CAC
- Services Provided at CFSH
- Explore how family violence impact children
- What is child sexual abuse
- Review types of child maltreatment and mandated reporting requirements
- Warning signs in children that may have been abused
- Prevention factors and discussion around how to increase resilience in children
Aspiration

Break the cycle of violence through the advocacy, prevention, intervention, treatment and research of family violence by integrating comprehensive services through community interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence-based practices.
Types of Child Maltreatment

Neglect
Physical Abuse
Emotional Abuse
Sexual Abuse
Family Violence
Sexual Abuse

Any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child.

Sexual abuse does not have to involve penetration, force, pain or even touching. If an adult engages in any sexual behavior (looking, showing, or touching) with a child to meet the adult’s sexual needs or interest, this is sexual abuse.
MYTH #1: It's only abuse if it's violent.

Fact: Physical abuse is just one type of child abuse. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.
MYTH #2: Only bad people abuse their children.

Fact: While it's easy to say that only "bad people" abuse their children, it's not always so black and white. Not all abusers are intentionally harming their children. Many have been victims of abuse themselves, and don’t know any other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.
MYTH #3: Child abuse doesn't happen in “good” families.

Fact: Child abuse doesn't only happen in poor families or bad neighborhoods. It crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. Sometimes, families who seem to have it all from the outside are hiding a different story behind closed doors.
MYTH #4: Most child abusers are strangers.

Fact: While abuse by strangers does happen, most abusers are family members or others close to the family.
MYTH #5: Abused children always grow up to be abusers.

Fact: It is true that abused children are more likely to repeat the cycle as adults, unconsciously repeating what they experienced as children. On the other hand, many adult survivors of child abuse have a strong motivation to protect their children against what they went through and become excellent parents.
All types of child abuse and neglect leave lasting scars.

Some of these scars might be physical, but emotional scarring has long lasting effects throughout life:

- damaging a child’s sense of self
- ability to have healthy relationships
- ability to function at home, at work and at school
The core element of all child abuse or neglect is the emotional effect on the child. Children need predictability, structure, clear boundaries, and the knowledge that they are safe. Abused children cannot predict how their parents will act. No matter the type of abuse, the end result is a child that feels unsafe, uncared for, and alone.
Physical Abuse

- Physical harm or injury to the child.
  - may be the result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child, but not always.
  - can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child’s age or physical condition.

- Many physically abusive parents and caregivers insist that their actions are simply forms of discipline—ways to make children learn to behave.
It's important to recognize that sexual abuse doesn't always involve body contact.

Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved.
Prevention

- The earlier child abuse is caught, the better the chance of recovery and appropriate treatment for the child.

- Of course, just because you see a warning sign doesn’t automatically mean a child is being abused. It’s important to dig deeper, looking for a pattern of abusive behavior and warning signs, if you notice something is off.
What is sexual abuse in Ohio?

Sexual abuse is defined by ages. It is illegal to have sexual contact with a child under the age of 13.

From ages 13-16 different laws apply. In general, people within this age range cannot have sexual contact if there is more than a 4 year age difference.

Over 16 can give consent. However, interference with custody can be charged.
What is sexual assault?

When any person is forcibly or coercively involved in a sexual act.

This may also involve deliberately exposing some one to genitals, or photos that are sexually offensive.

Sexual explicit images of children in any form; pornography, Internet etc.
Neglect Indicators

Inadequate Clothing
Malnutrition
Inadequate Supervision
Unusual School Attendance
Untreated Illness or Injury
Physical Abuse

Any non-accidental injury to a child caused as an act of commission (something you do to the child).
Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against someone with whom they have an intimate relationship.
Physical Abuse Indicators

- Bruises/black eyes
- Scratches
- Cuts
- Bites
- Burns
- Broken Bones
- Hair pulled out of head
The burden of shame

- Aside from the physical damage that sexual abuse can cause, the emotional component is powerful and far-reaching.

- Sexually abused children are tormented by shame and guilt.

- The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward.
Possible signs

- Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:
  - Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
  - Is secretive and isolated
  - Is jealous or controlling with family members
Possible Signs

- Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:
  - Has difficulty walking or sitting
  -Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
  -Reports nightmares or bedwetting
  -Experiences a sudden change in appetite
  -Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
  -Becomes pregnant or contracts an STI, particularly if under age 14
  -Runs away
  -Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
Possible Signs

- Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:
  - Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
  - Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
  - Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
  - Has a history of abuse as a child
Possible Signs

- Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
Physical abuse vs. Discipline

In physical abuse, unlike physical forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

- Unpredictability
- Lashing out in anger
- Using fear to control behavior
Possible Signs

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child
Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is either exhibiting inappropriate adult behavior or inappropriate infantile behavior.
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.
Examples of emotional child abuse:

- Constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating a child
- Calling names and making negative comparisons to others
- Telling a child he or she is “no good,” “worthless,” “bad,” or “a mistake”
- Frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying
- Ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving him or her the silent treatment
- Limited physical contact with the child—no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection
- Exposing the child to violence or the abuse of others, whether it be the abuse of a parent, a sibling, or even a pet
Did you know; 80% child sexual abuse is a gradual process and not a single event.

The offenders are most often people known to the child not strangers.

Learning the early warning signs and how to step in and speak up, sexual abuse can be stopped before a child is harmed. Adults must take the primary responsibility for preventing child sexual abuse by addressing any concerning or questionable behavior which may pose a risk to a child’s safety.
First Impressions: Exposure to Violence and A Child’s Developing Brain
Domestic Violence Indicators

Physical: injuries, bruising, broken bones, fingers, wrists

Claims of being “clumsy” or “accident prone”

Heavy makeup or heavy clothing

Frequent or chronic absenteeism

Tardiness
Emotional Abuse

Chronic attitudes or acts that interfere with a child’s psychological or social development
Emotional Abuse Indicators

Regressive behavior
Low self esteem
Withdrawn or shy
Aggression
Sexual Abuse/Assault Indicators

- Physical symptoms
- Regressive behaviors
- Significant change in demeanor
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Developmentally inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Unexplained fear of a specific person or situation
Why Children Do Not Disclose

Feelings of shame and taboo
Low self esteem
Loss of trust – feelings of betrayal
Unaware that acts are inappropriate
Fear of breaking up the family
Family/community rules about sharing “family business”
Threats
Confusion
Long Term Consequences of Abuse/Neglect

Low self esteem
Difficulty trusting others
Trouble expressing emotions appropriately
Difficulty coping with stress
Poor impulse control
Addictive behaviors
Destructive behaviors
Depression
Eating disorders
Sexual problems
Suicidal ideation, actions
Suggested Responses to Disclosure

Find a safe and quiet location
Ensure emotional safety
Listen and gather information
Know your school’s policy about disclosures
Ask for help
Take a Supportive Stance

- Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal responses
- Be supportive of the child
- Ask what happened to gather minimal facts
- Ask who did it
- Ask when it happened
- Inform the child of the next steps, but don’t make any promises
Mandatory reporting

O.R.C. 2151.42.1 Reporting law includes attorneys; medical personnel; marriage and family therapists; employees of a certified child care agency; school teachers; school employees; social workers; agents of a humane society; persons rendering spiritual treatment within the tenets of a well recognized religion.
Reporting Suspected Abuse/Neglect

Who should report?
You! Remember that you are a mandated reported and if you do not report, you are committing a crime!

When should you report?
When you have a reasonable suspicion that a child is being harmed.

When abuse/neglect is suspected, please call the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline of Franklin County Children’s Services at 614-229-7000. You may also notify local law enforcement if in line with your school’s policies or due to concerns of immediate safety.
What Information Should You Report

Name, age and address of victim
Name and address of parent/guardian
Description of alleged abuse
Name and address of alleged perpetrator

You do not need all of this information to make a report
RESOURCES...

The Center For Family Safety and Healing
Nationwide Children's
655 E. Livingston Avenue
Columbus, OH 43205
614-722-8200