

## Tips for Child Care Professionals

### Know the Signs

Knowing the signs of child abuse and neglect is an essential tool for anyone working with children. Make note of the warning signs below.

- Bruising in babies is NOT normal
- For a child of any age, bruising to the ears, neck, torso, buttocks, or genitals
- Burns on a young baby or child, such as those caused by cigarettes or immersion in hot water
- Pain when toileting, frequent yeast infections or urinary tract infections, or any sexually transmitted disease or related symptoms could be signs of sexual abuse
- Aggression toward peers, pets, other animals
- Seems afraid of parents or other adults

### Know the risk factors

There are many frustrating aspects of taking care of a child. Be sure to know, and educate parents and other caregivers about these potential triggers.

- Crying is normal in young babies and is also common daily in toddlerhood. Most children are not able to quit crying on demand until four years of age at the earliest.
- While listening to a child cry can become frustrating, shaking or harming a child is NEVER the answer. It is okay to leave the child in a crib or other safe place while you regroup.
- It is important to have realistic expectations of a child's development at a given age. Unrealistic expectations often lead to frustration and abuse. Some abusive events in toddlers occur in response to toilet training. Parents and caregivers may not know that most children are not fully potty-trained until after three years of age, and even then accidents are common.
- Substance abuse is often associated with child physical abuse or neglect. Children should never be left in the care of individuals who are under the influence of a mind-altering substance, including pain killers and "nerve pills."
- A new adult in the home can be a time where children are at a higher risk of abuse or neglect, whether it is a parent returning from jail or prison, a parent in the military returning from a deployment, or a new partner or significant other.
- Intimate partner violence is often associated with child physical abuse. If you see evidence that a child's caregiver has hit, kicked, shoved or threatened another with physical violence – he/she should NOT be caring for a young child.
- If you witness an event that causes you concern, document the situation and consider reporting it to authorities.
- If you are close with the caregiver, attempt to intervene and de-escalate a potential harmful situation in a kind and non-judgmental manner by offering to help out.
- Document all injuries that occur on children while they are in your care. Include how, when, and where the injury occurred, and what action you took to address it. If a child arrives at daycare with a new injury, inquire about it, document it, and if it concerns you, report it.

### Become a source of support and sound information for parents and caregivers:

- Develop a resource board by the area where parents usually sign in and display local resources such as 211 or fliers about housing, food, clothing, counseling and other special needs.
- Invite parents to contribute to the resource board with services they have found helpful.



CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ENDING CHILD ABUSE

- Listen without judgment.
- Make parents aware of the hotline **1-800-CHILDREN** to talk to a trained volunteer for information, support, and referrals to services in your area.
- Recommend that parents and caregivers keep a list of phone numbers on hand that they can call for support.
- Step in. Be supportive. Respond in positive ways. Ask “How can we help you?”
- Make space available for staff to meet with parents privately.
- Maintain confidentiality when parents share sensitive or private information.

### **Report**

Keep hotline contact information visible in the office and ensure that staff is trained on recognition and mandated reporting. By law, you are required to report suspected child abuse if you have a “reasonable suspicion.” Your options to do so include:

- In KY, if you need an immediate response, call toll free 24/7 at **(877) KYSAFE1/(877) 597-2331**.
- To report non-emergency situations that do not require an immediate response, you can use the web-based reporting system at [reportitky.org](http://reportitky.org). The web option is available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday, except for state holidays.