



Section 1: Administrative / Medical Control

GUIDELINE/PROCEDURES: CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT

Child abuse is the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare. The recognition of abuse and the proper reporting is a critical step to improving the safety of children and preventing child abuse.

PURPOSE

Assessment of a child abuse case based upon the following principles:

- Protect the life of the child from harm, as well as that of the EMS team from liability.
- Suspect that the child may be a victim of abuse, especially if the injury / illness is not consistent with the reported history.
- Respect the privacy of the child and family.
- Collect as much evidence as possible, especially information.

PROCEDURE

1. With all children, assess for and document psychological characteristics of abuse, including excessive passivity, compliant or fearful behavior, excessive aggression, violent tendencies, excessive crying, fussy behavior, hyperactivity, or other behavioral disorders.
2. With all children, assess for and document physical signs of abuse, including especially any injuries that are inconsistent with the reported mechanism of injury. The back, buttocks, genitals, and face are common sites for abusive injuries.
3. With all children, assess for and document signs and symptoms of neglect, including inappropriate level of clothing for weather, inadequate hygiene, absence of attentive caregiver(s), or physical signs of malnutrition.
4. With all children, assess for and document signs of sexual abuse, including torn, stained, or bloody underclothing, unexplained injuries, pregnancy, or sexually transmitted diseases.
5. Immediately report any suspicious findings to both the receiving hospital (if transported). Law Enforcement must also be notified.
6. EMS should not accuse or challenge the suspected abuser. This is a legal requirement to report, not an accusation. In the event of a child fatality, law enforcement must also be notified.

- Child abuse / neglect are widespread enough that nearly all EMS providers will see these problems at some time. The first step in recognizing abuse or neglect is to accept that they exist and to learn the signs and symptoms.
- Initiate treatment as necessary for situation using established protocols.
- If possible remove child from scene, transporting to hospital even if there is no medical reason for transport.
- If parents refuse permission to transport, notify law enforcement for appropriate disposition. If patient is in immediate danger, let law enforcement handle scene.
- Advise parents to go to hospital. **AVOID ACCUSATIONS** as this may delay transport. Adult with child may not be the abuser.

RED FLAGS TO CHILD ABUSE:

The presence of a red flag does not necessarily mean maltreatment. The suspicion of maltreatment is also based upon the EMS provider's observations and assessment.

Signs that parents may display may include (not all inclusive):

- Parent apathy
- Parent over reaction
- A story that changes or that is different when told by two different "witnesses"
- Story does not match the injury
- Injuries not appropriate for child's age
- Unexplained injuries

Signs that the child may display may include (not all inclusive):

- Pattern burns (donuts, stocking, glove, etc.)
 - Multiple bruises in various stages of healing
 - Not age appropriate when approached by strangers
 - Not age appropriate when approached by parent
- Blood in undergarments