Child Abuse

Your child is being battered or abused if someone close to them, hits, pushes, or physically hurts them in any way. They are also being abused if they are forced into activities without concern for their rights. They are being sexually abused if they are forced to have sexual contact of any kind (vaginal, oral, or anal). They are emotionally abused if they are made to feel worthless or their self-esteem or well being is constantly attacked or threatened. Abuse may get more severe with time and even end in death. It is important to remember help is available. No one has the right to abuse anyone. Children of abuse often have no one to turn to for help. It is up to adults around children who are abused to **protect the child**. The bottom line is **protecting the child**. Even if you are not sure if abuse is occurring, but suspect abuse, it is best to err on the side of safety for the child's sake. **If you do not go to the aid of a child in need and you know abuse is occurring, you are also guilty of mistreatment of the child.**

If you are the one abusing your child or children, get professional help. If you feel sometimes that you are at the end of your rope and can no longer cope, talk to someone. **HELP IS AVAILABLE.** You simply have to ask for it. Do not become a mother or father sitting in a correctional facility who has shaken their baby or child to death.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Take your child out of the home if you feel that violence is going to occur. Learn the warning signs of danger. This varies with situations but may include: use of alcohol; weapon threats; threats to your child, yourself and other family members or pets; forced sexual contact.
- If you or your child are attacked or beaten, report it to the police so the abuse is documented.
- Find someone you can trust and tell them what is happening to you or your child. It is very important to get a child out of an abusive situation as soon as possible. They cannot protect themselves and are in danger.
- It is important to have a safety plan in case you or your child are threatened:
  - Keep extra clothing for yourself and your children, medicines, money, important phone numbers and papers, and an extra set of car and house keys at a friend's or neighbor's house.
  - Tell a supportive friend or family member that you may show up at any time of day or night in an emergency.
  - If you do not have a close friend or family member, make a list of other safe places to go (shelters, crisis centers, etc.) Keep an abuse hotline number available. They can help you.
  - Many victims do not leave bad situations because they do not have money or a job. Planning ahead may help you in the future. Try to save money in a safe place. Keep your job or try to get a job. If you cannot get a job, try to obtain training you may need to prepare you for one. Social services are equipped to help you and your child. **Do not stay or leave your child in an abusive situation.** The result may be fatal.

You may need the following phone numbers, so keep them close at hand:

- Social Services: Look up your local branch.
- Local safe house or shelter: Look up your local branch.
- National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA): 1-800-TRY-NOVA (1-800-879-6682).
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: (202) 638-6388 or (303) 839-1852.
- Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-Achild (1-800-422-4453)

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child have new problems because of injuries.
- You feel the danger of you or your child being abused is becoming greater.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are afraid of being threatened, beaten, or abused; or call your local medical emergency services.
- You receive injuries related to abuse.

- Your child has unexplained injuries.
- You notice circular burn marks (cigarettes burn) or whip marks on your child's skin.

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