

FAMILY LAW: IS IT ABUSE OR NEGLECT?



90 MINUTES

On the Road to Effective Parenting methods: The Law's Role (30 minutes)

Mandatory Reporting (10 minutes)

Is It Abuse or Neglect? (40 minutes)

Summary (10 minutes)

OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze state-specific child abuse and neglect reporting laws and procedures.
- Identify community resources dealing with child abuse and neglect.
- Identify situations that constitute child abuse or neglect.
- Listen to diverse opinions.
- Use effective parenting skills.

HANDOUTS

1. Child Abuse and Neglect: Laws to Know
2. Is It Abuse or Neglect?
3. Where to Go for More Information
4. Reflections

PREPARING TO TEACH

- Copy **Handouts**.
- Post the session outcomes.
- Draw a road on the board. Label one end of the road, "Effective" Parenting methods. Label the other end "Ineffective" Parenting methods.
- Cut out footprints (located at the end of the lesson) to distribute in class.
- Adapt the laws as indicated in the body of the lesson.
- Add any local community resource information to **Handout 3, Where to Go For More Information**.

REVIEW TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Small groups
- Questioning

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE

Invite a family law judge or attorney or a social worker that is familiar with child protective services to assist with this lesson. Send a copy of the lesson and the "Suggestions for the Community Resource Person" (found in the front section of the manual) when confirming the date and location.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Teaching about child abuse and neglect is difficult, but by tackling this topic, you can help participants get any services they may need and parent effectively. This is particularly the case when it is likely that some of your participants may have had personal experience with child abuse and neglect and the child welfare system. We suggest that you tell participants upfront any reporting obligations you have and discuss

the reasons behind these laws. Additionally, be prepared to have resource people (e.g., a school counselor, a therapist) for participants if they need professional help to deal with the ramifications of abuse and neglect.

REMINDER

If you are a law student, tell participants upfront that you are not a lawyer and *cannot* give legal advice. Focus on teaching the general legal concepts, developing life skills, and directing participants to community and legal resources in the event they have a specific need. Know your state's unauthorized practice of law restrictions.

WEB RESOURCES

Child Abuse and Neglect: The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>) provides state-specific information, including reporting and immunity laws (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/general/statespecific/index.cfm>). The Pew Commission for Children in Foster Care has a helpful chart of the child abuse/neglect system and other good information in the resources section of: www.pewfostercare.org. Prevent Child Abuse America has helpful information at www.preventchildabuse.org.

Staying Home Alone: According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web page at: www.nccic.org/faqs/homealone.html, states do not have laws or regulations concerning at what age a child can care for him or herself. The HHS site does provide examples of state guidelines to help parents make the decision. Additionally, for some factors to consider in deciding if your child is ready to stay home alone, visit the The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent/0399/.

Compulsory Education Laws: For the Supreme Court 1992 decision in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, click on www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/449/. For an index of state compulsory school attendance laws, visit www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0112617.html.

WHAT THE ICONS MEAN



Have the RESOURCE PEOPLE help you with this part of the lesson.



Adapt law, procedure, and/or community resources for your area.

ON THE ROAD TO EFFECTIVE PARENTING METHODS: THE LAW'S ROLE (30 MINUTES)

1

Refer to posted session outcomes and review.

2

Point to the road on the board or wall with “Effective” Parenting methods and “Ineffective” Parenting methods.

3

Tell the class that Sharon, a parent of a two-year-old and a ten-month-old, needs help in deciding if her actions or those of her neighbors are effective or ineffective parenting methods. Inform participants that:

All parents make mistakes and just because a parent uses an ineffective parenting method occasionally does not mean that the parent is an ineffective parent. People have different opinions about what are effective and ineffective parenting methods. However, most of us can agree on what would be considered child abuse and neglect.

4

Distribute one of the attached footprints to each participant or create your own footprints.

Each footprint reveals some action that Sharon has done in the past in raising Jason (age 2) and Nicole (age 10 months) or an action that a neighbor of Sharon's has used in raising her child.



TIP: Select footprints that address issues of particular interest to your class or create footprints of your own to reflect class interests. Try to choose footprints that represent examples of both effective and ineffective parenting methods and clear examples of child abuse and neglect. The neighbors' actions illustrate instances of child abuse or neglect in order to focus attention on a parent other than Sharon. Discussion of each footprint should take approximately 2 minutes. This activity is an introductory activity and should move quickly in order to complete the lesson.

5

Direct the participants to do the following:

- Place the footprint in the appropriate place on the road between “Effective” Parenting methods and “Ineffective” Parenting methods. For example, if a footprint says Sharon bathes her children every day before bed, a participant could decide to place the footprint near the “Effective” Parenting methods.
- Prepare to explain your decisions. In the above example, the participant explains that children need to be bathed regularly as they play on the floor and touch anything that is in sight. A clean child is a healthier child. The participant places the footprint near instead of on the “Effective” Parenting method sign, because while this is excellent parenting, there may be times when it is inappropriate to bathe a child. For example, when the child is sick or has been out late that evening visiting grandparents. Parents must be flexible in meeting child’s needs.

6

One by one allow each participant time to place his or her footprint on the board and explain his or her reasoning. Sample questions include:

- Why did you place your footprint there?
- What might be a better action?
- What additional information would you want to know? How would it affect your opinion?

7

Invite the rest of the class to comment on whether they would place the footprint at the same location. Have them explain their reasoning.

8

After all of the participants have placed and discussed their footprint, distribute **Handout 1, Child Abuse and Neglect: Laws to Know** and review. Have the resource person identify any state child abuse and neglect laws that are different from the general definitions in **Handout 1**.



What are your state’s laws and definitions for child abuse and neglect?

Handout 1**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: LAWS TO KNOW**

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Any recent act or failure on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in serious physical or emotional harm, death, or sexual abuse or exploitation of a person under 18. This also includes an act or failure to act that puts a child at risk of serious harm.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Non-accidental physical injury caused by shaking, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, or burning.

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Continuous and severe verbal put-downs or actions that cause mental harm to a child.

SEXUAL ABUSE

An act where a child is inappropriately touched, raped, subjected to sexual harm, or exploited for prostitution or child pornography.

NEGLECT

Failure of caretakers to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be intentional or unintentional. Neglect includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, supervision, protection, or education. Neglect also includes situations where there is an immediate threat of harm to the child's health or welfare.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT LAW

If a child is abused or neglected by her or his parents, guardian, or caretaker, the family court judge will take actions to protect the child. Judges will order actions that are in the "best interests" of the child and make reasonable efforts to help families stay together.

9

Ask the class if any of the information contained on their footprints falls within the definitions of child abuse or neglect. Review the definitions. The resource person can direct participants to comment on the footprints that fall within the definitions of abuse and neglect as follows:

- Sharon's neighbor forces her 8-year-old daughter to take photos while she and her husband have sex. **Sexual abuse.**
- Every day Sharon's neighbor tells her daughter that she was a mistake and that she wishes she had never been born. **Emotional or psychological abuse.**
- Sharon's neighbor breaks a bottle over her son's head to punish him for staying out all night. **Physical abuse.**

- Sharon's neighbor leaves his infant with his 10-year-old cousin. This likely would be considered **neglect**.



TIP: If you did not use distribute these particular footprints then have students give examples of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

10

Inform the students that abuse and neglect laws do not tell us how to be effective parents. Instead the law only steps in to tell us how we *cannot* parent in order to protect the physical and emotional health and safety of a child.

11

Compliment the class on an excellent job of identifying effective and ineffective parenting methods. Ask them to review some of the effective parenting methods that they learned from this activity. Follow-up by asking:

- Are any of these effective parenting methods that you can use with your family?
- If so, which methods work for you?
- Which methods might you want to try in the future?

12

Have participants develop a list of skills people need to be effective parents. Where appropriate, link their answers to skills that they are developing in class. Sample skills include:

- patience
- love
- ability to access information and assistance
- appropriate family management practices
- problem-solving skills
- cooperation
- communication

13

Inform the class that in order to be the best parents possible, it is important to think about what conditions make child abuse more likely to happen and that just because some of these factors exist in a home does not mean that a child is being abused. Ask the class to name some actions, either from the footprints or from their own knowledge that they think can lead to child abuse or neglect. Continue the discussion with the class in brainstorming reasons why parents abuse their children and any ideas

for solutions to combat these problems. Discuss their ideas. Sample ideas include:

- frustration
- fatigue
- no assistance or help with child rearing
- lack of family management skills
- inappropriate notions of discipline
- lack of problem-solving skills
- inappropriate sexual behavior
- parental stress
- no knowledge or use of community resources that can help families
- prior abuse of family members
- drug or alcohol addiction

MANDATORY REPORTING (10 MINUTES)

1

Question the participants by asking:

- What would you do if they saw a neighbor yelling and putting out a cigarette on her child?
- What would you do if you were a 2nd grade teacher and you thought one of your students was being burned by their mother?
- What would you do if you were a doctor and you found cigarette burns on a child?
- Looking at the above examples, who –a neighbor, a teacher, a doctor— should be required to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect? Why?

2

Ask participants if they know the term “mandated reporter.” Inform participants:

In all states there are people like teachers and doctors who, because of their jobs, are required by law to report any suspected child abuse to the appropriate state authorities. These people are called “mandated reporters”. There are also some states that require anyone who suspects abuse or neglect to report it. A person can report (in most states anonymously) a suspicion of abuse by calling the local Child Protective Services or the police, at 911. A report should trigger an investigation of the situation, if the report appears to be well-founded. Even if a person is not a mandated reporter, they can still report child abuse and neglect.

3

Ask participants:

- Do you think mandated reporting laws are good laws? Why or why not?
- Do you think everyone should be required to report child abuse? If not, what jobs do you think should require people to be mandated reporters? (In 18 states, everyone is required to report.)

Write their suggestions on the flip chart, board, or transparency.

4

Tell participants who the mandated reporters are in their state and whether they are immune from prosecution if they report in error. Discuss the standard for reporting.



Who is required under state law to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect? Are they accorded immunity? Are reports confidential? What is the standard for reporting?

5

Tell participants whether you are a mandated reporter and are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect or not, you should report incidences of child abuse. Have participants comment on why it is important to report child abuse and neglect. Sample points to bring out include:

- The safety of an innocent child is at stake.
- A trained professional will be able to investigate to see if your suspicions are accurate.
- The system is designed to help the family get services.
- In some states, it is the law to report.
- You may not have to give your name if you are concerned about protecting your identity.
- It is better to err on the side of caution than jeopardize the safety of a child.

Inform participants of the steps you take if you suspect a child is being abused or neglected. Mention that if the child is in immediate danger or you witness a child being beaten, you should first call the police. Explain to participants how they can report suspected abuse or neglect.



How do you report child abuse and neglect in your state?

6

Explain or have the resource person explain what happens in your state after a person has called to reports suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect.

Generally, in most states, a child protective worker from the social service agency will visit the family to determine if the child is in immediate danger and whether it is necessary to call in the police or a doctor. Under extreme circumstances, the child will be removed from the home pending a court hearing. Otherwise, the worker will interview the parents and observe the physical and emotional conditions of the child to determine whether to file a petition with the family court. Sometimes reports turn out to be “false alarms,” and no action is taken.



What happens in your state once a report is made?

IS IT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT? (40 MINUTES)

1

Distribute **Handout 2, Is It Child Abuse or Neglect?** to all of the participants, and read the directions aloud.

Handout 2**IS IT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?**

Directions: You are a neighbor to the following families and children. You are aware of the following behavior on the part of some parents. For each situation:

- a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.
- b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?
- c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

2

Put participants into groups of three or four. Tell the groups to begin by discussing scenario number one and decide what they should do, then move on to the other scenarios. They will have 10 minutes.



TIP: You will not be able to do all the scenarios, so select a few.

3

After the time is up, call on one group and ask what they decided to do in the first scenario. Then go to another group for the second one – continuing until each scenario has been discussed. Encourage participants to come up with creative remedies or alternatives to solve any problems they identify.

1. Parents go away for the weekend and leave their 6-year-old daughter in the care of their 12-year-old son.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

Local laws usually *do not* state the age at which children may be left alone without supervision. Instead laws look at the “totally of the circumstances” (e.g., the age of the child, the maturity level, the time of day, the length of time, etc.) in deciding what is reasonable. For example, it would be neglect, to leave a 6-month-old at home, even for a brief period of time. While in some states 12-year-olds may begin baby-sitting during specified hours and for specified ages, leaving a 12-year-old to care for a 6-year-old for an entire weekend would be considered neglect in most courts. The local Child Protective Service often publishes guidelines on at what ages it is appropriate for children to be left alone.

b) Under your state law for scenario #1, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state’s definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a “reasonable suspicion” that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: Perhaps you or another neighbor could offer to help baby sit in some situations or at least tell the parent you are concerned and will help them find a babysitter. You also could offer to give your telephone number to the 12-year-old when he is taking care of the 6-year-old for a short period of time.



At what age can a parent leave a child at home unsupervised? At what age can a parent leave a child at home to supervise a sibling?

2. Two or three times a day, a mother uses her hand to spank her five-year old son until he cries.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

Usually, spanking a child occasionally would not be considered excessive, although many would consider it ineffective parenting and recommend that the parent use other forms of discipline like a time-out. However, in this case the spanking seems excessive since it is two to three times a day for an undefined but presumable extended time period. This would likely be considered abusive especially if it left marks or bruises.

b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state's definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a "reasonable suspicion" that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law for scenario #2, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it? Does your state law mention anything about spanking?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: Perhaps if you tell the parent you are concerned, they will be embarrassed and control their behavior. If you know a relative, you might ask them to intervene. Or you could contact the child's teacher. You could offer some information on parenting classes or buy the parents some books.

3. A couple has three children ages 7, 9 and 11. The parents are migrant workers. Since the family moves frequently, the children do not attend school.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

This would be neglect if the parents were not home-schooling their children. If parents do not provide their children with adequate educational instruction, they may be charged with neglecting the needs of their children. Parents do have some choices. They can send their children to different types of schools (public, private, religious) or home-school them.

b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state's definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a "reasonable suspicion" that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law for scenario #3, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: You could check with the parents to see if they would be willing to meet with local school officials to discuss the situation and what services the school can offer. Perhaps you could offer to take them and introduce them to the principal if they seem scared. You should inform them that it is against the law for a child to be kept out of school and for schools to discriminate against undocumented children. If your intervention does not help - you should report it to the appropriate person. For instance, you might try the principal of the nearby school and he or she will handle it.



What are the compulsory school attendance laws in your state? Is not following the compulsory school attendance laws considered neglect?

4. When a young girl misbehaves, her parents make her wear signs such as "I am a liar" or "I hit my brother" wherever she goes for several days.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

An argument can be made that holding a child out for public ridicule on a continuing basis is emotional abuse because the result may be destruction of a child's self-esteem. Children who attempt suicide often relate stories similar to this. The parents in the case on which this scenario is based were prosecuted for child abuse.

b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state's definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a "reasonable suspicion" that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law for scenario #4, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: Tell the parents you don't like this and explain why. Even if your law does not require you to report them, you may decide to in order to protect the children.

5. A mother tells her 14-year-old son that he can stay out all night and do whatever he wants, as long as he doesn't bother her.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

Telling a 14-year-old child that he can do anything he wants, including staying out all night could be considered totally irresponsible and could lead to charges of failure to provide adequate supervision.

b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state's definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a "reasonable suspicion" that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law for scenario #5, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: Talk to the 14 year-old and see if he is okay. Is there a reason he stays out all night? Perhaps you could encourage him to come in earlier. Talk to the mother and tell her that the principal of his daughter's school might report this behavior to social services. See if the mother needs any help herself.

6. A 3-year-old child is made to stand in a dark closet for five minutes as punishment.

a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.

It could be considered abusive, especially if the child experienced it as terrifying or humiliating. There also could be a case that this is inadequate supervision and neglect. Some might argue, while it is clearly ineffective parenting, this is not severe enough if a one-time occurrence to rise to the level of abuse or neglect warranting court involvement.

b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?

If your state requires everyone to report, you may be legally required to report this situation if it falls within your state's definition of child abuse for reporting purposes. Remember that the standard for reporting child abuse and neglect is typically if you have a "reasonable suspicion" that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur. This is a much lower burden than a court finding of child abuse and neglect. Answers will vary as to whether you should report it but get participants to think about the importance of helping the child(ren) involved.



Based on your state law for scenario #6, are neighbors mandatory reporters? Does this situation constitute a reportable offense? If so, how do you report it?

c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

Help: Give the mother other ideas on effective parenting, offer to baby-sit to help her out, or refer her to a parenting class. Tell her what you do when your child misbehaves. Invite her to attend a parenting class with you.

4

Point out:

Sometimes interfering in another family's business is not easy and might make people mad at you, but isn't it better to help solve the problem before it becomes a case of abuse and neglect and the family gets embroiled in the legal system and has to go to court?

5

Tell the participants about any community resources that are available to parents in need of help to prevent child abuse and neglect as well as to children who may be victims.

SUMMARY (10 MINUTES)

1

Ask the participants:

- What are some effective parenting skills and actions? Which ones do you think are the most important? How will you improve your parenting skills and actions?
- What information about abuse and neglect would be helpful to new parents and to others? Where would you get it?
- How would you help a parent who was on the verge of abusing his or her child?
- What are some community services and/or programs that might be helpful to parents and children?
- If you suspected someone was abusing a child, would you report it, and to whom? What other steps could you take?

2



Instruct participants to identify local resources available to help families. The resource person should comment on the list. Pass out **Handout 3, Where to Go for More**

Information. Have the resource person discuss.

Handout 3

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: If you suspect that a child is being abused or you are being abused, you can call your local Department of Social Services. You may also wish to call the police.

Getting Help for Abuse and Neglect: Most communities have organizations and people who can help you if you are being abused. You may wish to talk with a school counselor, a minister, a friend, a psychologist, or a lawyer. Some professionals, such as teachers and doctors, are required to report to Child Protective Services or the police if the professional suspects a child is being abused.

You can contact the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect at 1-800-FYI-3366 to get a list of helpful community organizations in your state. You can also call national crisis intervention hotlines on child abuse and family violence directly, ChildHelp USA at 1-800-422-4453 and the Youth Crisis Hotline at 1-800-448-4663. For more local information, call a local crisis hotline, a shelter, or an organization that helps children.

Learning about Effective Discipline: Most schools and communities have parenting classes that teach parents effective ways to discipline their children. Contact your local Women Infants and Children Program, your local Headstart, or your school.

3

Distribute **Handout 4, Reflections**. Encourage participants to complete.

Handout 4

REFLECTIONS

Is It Abuse or Neglect?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Give two examples of child abuse.

- 1.
- 2.

Do you think child abuse laws are a good idea? Why or why not?

You are a judge. The parents of a four-year-old daughter whip and kick her whenever she cries. What would you do?

List five things that you can do as a parent to prevent abuse from happening:

You are a neighbor and the parents next door whip and kick their 4 year old whenever she cries. What should you do?

List five things that you can do as a parent to prevent abuse from happening?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Do them!!

This activity was adapted from the following Street Law, Inc. materials:

- *Street Law for Parents and the Law*, Lesson 10: Is It Abuse or Neglect? © Street Law, Inc., 2004.

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Handout 1

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT: LAWS TO KNOW

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Any recent act or failure on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in serious physical or emotional harm, death, or sexual abuse or exploitation of a person under 18. This also includes an act or failure to act that puts a child at risk of serious harm.

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SEXUAL ABUSE

An act where a child is inappropriately touched, raped, subjected to sexual harm, or exploited for prostitution or child pornography.

NEGLECT

Failure of caretakers to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be intentional or unintentional. Neglect includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, supervision, protection or education. Neglect also includes situations where there is an immediate threat of harm to the child's health or welfare.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT LAW

If a child is abused or neglected by her or his parents, guardian, or caretaker, the family court judge will take actions to protect the child. Judges will order actions that are in the "best interests" of the child and make reasonable efforts to help families stay together.

Handout 2

IS IT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

Directions: You are a neighbor to the following families and children. You are aware of the following behavior on the part of some parents. For each situation:

- a) Decide whether or not the actions of the parent or parents should be considered child abuse or neglect. Explain your answer.
- b) Under your state law, would you (a neighbor) be required to report these actions? Should you?
- c) What can you do to help protect the child and help the family?

1. Parents go away for the weekend and leave their 6-year-old daughter in the care of their 12-year-old son.

2. Two or three times a day, a mother uses her hand to spank her 5-year-old son until he cries.

3. A couple has three children ages 7, 9 and 11. The parents are migrant workers. Since the family moves frequently, the children do not attend school.

4. When a young girl misbehaves, her parents make her wear signs such as "I am a liar" or "I hit my brother" wherever she goes for several days.

5. A mother tells her 14-year-old son that he can stay out all night and do whatever he wants, as long as he doesn't bother his mother.

6. A 3-year-old child is made to stand in a dark closet for five minutes as punishment.

Handout 3

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reporting Abuse and Neglect: If you suspect that a child is being abused or you are being abused, you can call your local Department of Social Services. You may also wish to call the police.

Getting Help for Abuse and Neglect: Most communities have organizations and people who can help you if you are being abused. You may wish to talk with a school counselor, a minister, a friend, a psychologist, or a lawyer. Some professionals, such as teachers and doctors, are required to report to Child Protective Services or the police if the professional suspects a child is being abused.

You can contact the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect at 1-800-FYI-3366 to get a list of helpful community organizations in your state. You can also call national crisis intervention hotlines on child abuse and family violence directly, ChildHelp USA at 1-800-422-4453 and the Youth Crisis Hotline at 1-800-448-4663. For more local information, call a local crisis hotline, a shelter, or an organization that helps children.

Learning about Effective Discipline: Most schools and communities have parenting classes that teach parents effective ways to discipline their children. Contact your local Women, Infants and Children Program, your local Headstart, or your school.

Handout 4

REFLECTIONS

IS IT ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Give two examples of child abuse.

- 1.
- 2.

Do you think child abuse laws are a good idea? Why or why not?

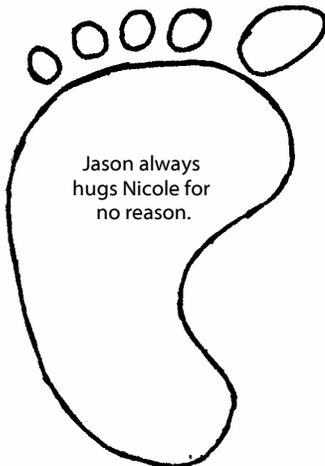
You are a neighbor and the parents next door whip and kick their 4 year old whenever she cries. What should you do?

List five things that you can do as a parent to prevent abuse from happening:

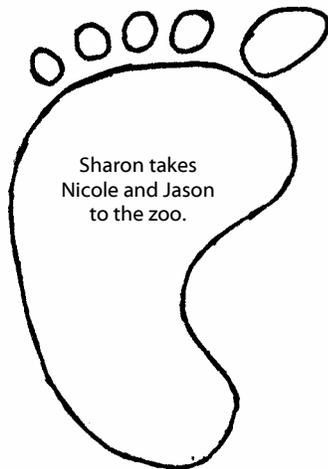
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Do them!!

FOOTPRINTS



FOOTPRINTS



FOOTPRINTS

