

Schedule "E" to SAFE CHURCH POLICY of MARANATHA CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH  
(MCRC) EDMONTON

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Abused children rarely exhibit just one sign that they are the victims of abuse. Some symptoms may also represent typical developmental changes or the after-effect of traumas in their lives other than abuse. Conversely, it is possible for abuse to be taking place without the appearance of noticeable symptoms because of the child's ability to mask or deny what would otherwise be very confusing and painful to acknowledge. Generally, several signs observed over a period of time suggest that a child may be suffering from abuse.

### **A. Infants and Pre-school Children**

1. Regression to an earlier stage of development such as baby talk, thumb sucking, or bedwetting.
2. Change in social behaviour - excessive crying or clinging, or becoming aggressive or withdrawn - that is not associated with normal developmental stages.
3. Physical manifestations such as loss of bowel control, bedwetting, frequent urination, headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, sore throats accompanied by gagging, stains in the child's underclothes.
4. Exhibiting signs of fear around a family member/familiar person, or fear of a familiar place/object.
5. Fear of being touched, shying away from physical contact. Resistance to being diapered or assisted to the bathroom.
6. Use of explicit language or sexual behaviour that is beyond the child's comprehension or life experience.
7. Unexplained injuries and/or bruises, repeated injuries blamed on the child's carelessness, multiple bruises sustained in one event, or bruises to child's midsection, back, head, or back of thighs; signs of scalding, burning or distinctive bruising, such as in the shape of a belt buckle; multiple bruises in various stages of healing.
8. Name-calling toward children, bullying behaviour, sulking/brooding.
9. Fascination with fires: i.e. playing with matches, lighter.

### **B. School-age Children**

1. Physical manifestations as above with addition of complaints of pain, irritation, soreness, redness on the child's bottom, smearing faeces on walls or objects.
2. Pattern of injuries, multiple injuries, injuries about the face or neck, failure to complain about or explain an obvious physical discomfort.
3. Unusual fears: a familiar person, a particular room, a particular object, or fear of new experiences.
4. Poor concentration in classroom.
5. Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviours, striving for perfection, acting miserable if failing.
6. Engaging in self-injury, engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour in a public setting.
7. Acting enraged and out of control; expressing anger through destruction.
8. Shyness about physical touch.
9. Exhibiting sexual behaviour beyond comprehension or maturity level; behaving in a sexual manner with other children or adults.
10. Exhibiting signs of needing to be in control of others or situations, bullying others.
11. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions.
12. Acting out, including hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting.
13. Frequent absences from school or other scheduled events either because of being punished or to hide bruises.

14. Low self-esteem, particular sensitivity to criticism.
15. Hyper-vigilance --excessive and suspicious watching of other people; is easily startled.
16. Preoccupation with fire and setting fires

**C Adolescents**

1. Eating disorders, use of laxatives, unexplained and dramatic changes in weight.
2. Change in sleep patterns, including excessive sleeping, sleeping during the day and insomnia.
3. Performance in school plunges, truancy increases.
4. Perfectionist behaviour, excessive self-criticism, attempting to please adults, overreacting to any form of criticism or complaint.
5. Sexually provocative or asexual behaviour, denial of body changes and sexual development. For females this may include seeking affection from older adult males.
6. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol.
7. Self-abusive behaviour including cutting self, preoccupation with danger and weapons, suicide attempts, experimentation with drugs and/or alcohol.
8. Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children.
9. Emotional numbness, inability to be emotionally supportive to others.
10. Having few friends, changing friends often.
11. Depression and other signs of withdrawal and avoidance.
12. Refusing to attend to basic hygiene.
13. Hyper-vigilance -- excessive and suspicious watching of other people; is easily startled.

**D. Neglect (All Ages)**

1. Appearing to be underfed, constantly hungry, underweight for size and age.
2. Begging for food, stealing food, hoarding food.
3. Lack of supervision, underage child supervising another child or children.
4. Chronic absenteeism from school, unattended educational needs.
5. Unattended medical, dental needs.
6. Consistent or frequent lack of hygiene, poor hygiene, or lack of cleanliness resulting in odours.
7. For infants, failure to thrive.

**E. Parental Behaviours and Home Life (All Ages)**

1. Not attending meetings about the child, lack of interest in the child, critical of the child.
2. Constantly putting child down, using harsh words to describe child, using threats.
3. Describing their child as underachiever, complaining that he/she lets people down, is unmotivated, achieves less than brothers and sisters.
4. Speaking of child in a way that sounds romantic, too grown-up, too sugary, and too perfect.
5. Hostile, closed-minded, overprotective, does not let others in the house, will not participate in activities with other parents, makes excuses about failure to do tasks, talks about things not being good at home.
6. Reports of past/other suspicious behaviour, reports that an older brother or sister may have been mistreated.
7. Chemical dependency by one or both parents.
8. Sudden and dramatic changes in family's financial security.