

# Fact Sheet: Child Maltreatment

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## Child Maltreatment : The Facts

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### What is Child Maltreatment?

Child maltreatment is “any recent act or failure to act on the part of the parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation” or failure to act which can cause imminent risk of harm to a child<sup>1</sup>. Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect.



### Have you Heard?

- ◇ 1 in 7 children have experienced child maltreatment in the past year, most likely an underestimate<sup>2</sup>
- ◇ In 2019, there were 1,840 child fatalities due to child maltreatment in the U.S., 235 of those fatalities in Texas<sup>3</sup>
- ◇ Children in families of low socioeconomic status are five times more likely to experience child abuse and/or neglect<sup>2</sup>
- ◇ Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment<sup>4</sup>
- ◇ Children three years or younger are the most vulnerable to abuse and neglect<sup>4</sup>

### What are the Consequences?

Children may suffer from physical injuries, such as bruises or broken bones, and emotional/psychological problems, such as anxiety. Child maltreatment has life-long impacts. For instance, children exposed to violence have an increased risk for injury, future victimization and perpetration of

violence, substance abuse, and limited employment opportunities. Chronic abuse may lead to toxic stress resulting in changes in brain development and increased risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder and other learning difficulties.

### Who Can Report Child Maltreatment?

- ◇ Texas requires any person over the age of 18 that suspects that a child has been abused or neglected must immediately report.
- ◇ Reports can be made online
- ◇ In case of emergencies, call 9-1-1

### How Can You Help?

- ◇ Educate children on the signs of abuse, such as use of appropriate terms for body parts
- ◇ Raise awareness within schools through campaigns
- ◇ Offer trainings to school staff and parents

### Resources

#### 9-1-1

#### Texas

- ◇ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services—1-800-252-5400—<https://www.txabusehotline.org>
- ◇ Children's Safe Harbor—(936)-756-4644—<https://childrenssafeharbor.org>
- ◇ The Children's Assessment Center—(713)-986-3300—<https://cachouston.org>

#### National

Child Help National Child Abuse Hotline—1-800-422-4453—<https://www.childhelp.org>

### References

- 1 Child Welfare Gateway Information. (n.d.). *Definitions of child abuse & neglect*. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/defining/>
- 2 Fortson B, Klevens J, Merrick M, Gilbert L, & Alexander S. (2016). Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities. *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can-prevention-technical-package.pdf>
- 3 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2021). *Child Maltreatment 2019*. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2019\\_4.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2019_4.pdf)

4 Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (n.d.). *When and how to report child abuse: Too many child victims*. [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Child\\_Safety/report\\_abuse.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/report_abuse.asp)