



# For the Well-being of Youth and Adults

**T**he Oregon 4-H Youth Development Program believes in the right of every child to a safe and nurturing environment. Actions against children that contribute to child abuse or neglect are contrary to the values of the Oregon 4-H Youth Development Program. We oppose such actions in all settings.

People who work with children might at some point in their careers have to report child abuse. It's important that you be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and be able to contact the appropriate authorities. By reporting suspected abuse, you could save a child's life or prevent serious injury. Characteristics of abuse and how to identify them listed in this publication are general and intended as guidelines. A child or family might exhibit many warning signs of abuse even though no abuse has occurred or will occur.

## What is Child Abuse?

Oregon (ORS 419B.005) defines child abuse as:

- Any assault, as defined in ORS chapter 163, of a child and any physical injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.
- Any mental injury to a child, which shall include only observable and substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological abilities to function caused by cruelty to the child, with due regard to the culture of the child.
- Rape of a child, which includes but is not limited to rape, sodomy, unlawful sexual penetration, and incest as those acts are defined in ORS chapter 163.
- Sexual abuse as defined in ORS chapter 163.
- Sexual exploitation, including use of children for pornography and prostitution.
- Negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including but not limited to failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. Any child who is under care or treatment solely by spiritual means pursuant to the religious beliefs or practices of the child or the child's parents or guardians shall not for this reason alone be considered a neglected or maltreated child.
- Threatened harm to a child, which means subjecting a child to substantial risk of harm to the child's health and welfare.

## Notes

## Notes

- Child selling, which includes buying, selling, or trading for legal or physical custody of a child. This does not apply to legitimate adoptions or domestic relations planning.

### Families at Risk

We often picture the home as a place of safety and relaxation. Unfortunately, abuse occurs most often in the child's home. Child abuse can occur in any family. Families at risk of abusing a child, however, typically have the following similar characteristics:

- The family is isolated from the community.
- The parents are less than 30 years of age and one of them is a full-time homemaker.
- The family is experiencing economic, social, or special stresses.
- The family has lived in a neighborhood for fewer than 2 years or frequently changes residence.
- The parent(s) does not participate in organized community groups.
- Either parent has a history of being abused as children.
- Either parent has a history of alcohol or drug abuse.

### Reporting Responsibilities

**Who must report:** According to Oregon Revised Statute 419B.010, "Any public or private official having reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom the official comes in contact has suffered abuse, or that any person with whom the official comes in contact has abused a child shall report or cause a report to be made..." Those "public or private officials" include:

Physicians, including any intern or resident	Dentist
School employee	Peace officer
Licensed practical nurse or registered nurse	Psychologist
Licensed clinical social worker	Clergy
Licensed marriage and family therapist	Chiropractor
Licensed professional counselor	Optometrist
Naturopathic physician	Attorney
Emergency medical technicians	Firefighters

Certified provider of day care, foster care, or an employee thereof

Court-appointed special advocate, as defined in ORS 412A.004

Employee of the Department of Human Resources, State Commission on Children and Families, Child Care Division of the Employment Department, the Oregon Youth Authority, county health department, community mental health and developmental disabilities program, a county juvenile department, a licensed child-serving agency, or an alcohol and drug treatment program.

A psychiatrist, psychologist, clergyperson, or attorney shall not be required to report information communicated to him/her by a person if the communication is privileged under ORS 40.225 to 40.295.

One of the categories in the state statute is school employees (school in this context refers to K–12, not higher education). This would include teachers, cooks, teaching assistants, custodians, and administrators.

**Extension volunteers:** Volunteer 4-H leaders are strongly urged to report suspected child abuse, but are not required to report by state statute—unless the 4-H leader happens to also fit one of the categories outlined in the state statute (see “who must report”).

**Extension faculty/staff:** Extension employees are strongly urged to report suspected child abuse, and it is the policy of the University that abuse be reported, but it does not appear that they are required to report by state statute—unless the employee happens to also fit one of the categories outlined in the state statute (see “who must report”).

## Reporting Guidelines

### How do I respond to a child who discloses?

#### DO

- Believe the child and be supportive
- Be on the same eye level
- Find a private place to talk
- Reassure the child that it is okay to tell what happened
- Listen to the child
- Rephrase important thoughts—use the child’s vocabulary
- Tell the child help is available
- Trust your “gut” feelings
- Seek your own support system
- Let the child know you need to report it to someone who can help him or her

#### DON’T

- Promise confidentiality
- Panic or express shock
- Ask leading or suggestive questions
- Make negative comments about the alleged perpetrator
- Disclose information indiscriminately

**It is NOT the responsibility of, nor is it appropriate for, Extension Service volunteers, staff, or faculty to conduct child abuse/neglect investigations.**

## Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect

Once you suspect abuse or neglect, you need to contact the proper authorities.

*Extension volunteers* who suspect or witness child abuse at 4-H activities are expected to first contact a county Extension faculty or staff member. This needs to be done immediately so potential follow-up action can be completed in an appropriate amount of time.

## Notes

*Extension faculty and staff* who witness or suspect abuse need to report in a timely manner to the local office of the State Office for Services to Children and Families or to a law enforcement agency within the county where the person making the report is at the time of the contact. **The county faculty or staff member also needs to make direct contact with either the State 4-H Program Leader or Assistant State 4-H Program Leader regarding the situation.** In addition, the county staff chair and regional director should be informed.

If known, reports of suspected child abuse should contain the following information:

- Name, age, and address of the child
- Name of child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care
- The nature and extent of abuse, including any evidence of previous abuse and any explanation given by caretakers for injuries
- All information that you believe might be helpful in establishing the cause of the abuse and identifying the abuser

### Can I be sued if I report?

Oregon law (ORS 419B.025) provides that anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report of child abuse, and who has reasonable grounds for making the report, shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed with respect to the making or content of such report. Any such participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participating in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report.

### Adult/Youth Interaction—Barriers to Abuse

- Salaried staff and volunteers are expected to have another adult present when working with children or to work with the children in a group with two or more children present. Where possible, being alone with a single child is to be avoided.
- Salaried staff and volunteers will not, under any circumstances, discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food, water, or shelter.
- Salaried staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children each time they participate in a program. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse should be reported.
- Salaried staff and volunteers will encourage parents/other responsible adults to visit Extension programs at any time.
- Salaried staff and volunteers will be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information related to suspected and actual child abuse and/or neglect.
- Salaried staff and volunteers will work with young people in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter (NOT behind closed doors). Be aware that while spending time alone with a single child can be positive and helpful, it can also be a reason for concern for everyone involved.

- Salaried staff and volunteers need to respect the privacy of youth. The privacy issue is especially relevant in situations involving changing clothes or taking showers in facilities lacking privacy. In these situations, staff and volunteers should intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires. Adults also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- Salaried staff and volunteers should not share a room with one minor child who is not his or her child. Youth should room with other youth at Extension events. If the situation dictates that an adult and a youth share a room, there should be several youth with a single adult.
- Salaried staff and volunteers should use the following guidelines related to hugging and touching youth: hugs are okay if they are appropriate and if both people are comfortable with them. Take clues from body language of the child or simply ask, “Is it okay for me to hug you?” Additional considerations include:
  - It is very important to be aware of children’s personal boundaries and to respect them.
  - Touching should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
  - Touching should avoid breasts, buttocks, and groin.
  - Touching should be open and not secretive.
  - Touching or other physical contact should be governed by the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Salaried staff and volunteers should use the “buddy” system to help protect everyone. Have the youth use this system by not going anywhere without their buddy.
- Salaried staff and volunteers need to be aware that physical and/or mental hazing and “secret” initiations and organizations are not part of the 4-H Youth Development Program.
- Salaried staff and volunteers need to be aware that topics and conversations that may be okay with an adult audience may NOT be appropriate with a youth audience. Inappropriate jokes and conversations need to be avoided where youth may overhear private conversations.
- Salaried staff and volunteers are encouraged to follow the above recommendations on those occasions when socializing with 4-H members under the age of 18 outside of Extension program activities.

As we work with youth, common sense and the well-being of those we work with should help guide the decisions we make. Supervision of all groups, along with the “adult/youth interaction—barriers to abuse” for salaried staff and volunteers, help establish program barriers that make it less likely an abusive situation will occur.

## Signs of Child Abuse

**Note:** A single indicator does not prove that abuse is taking place, but the repeated presence of an indicator or a combination of indicators should alert educators to the possibility of abuse. Often there are no visible indicators.

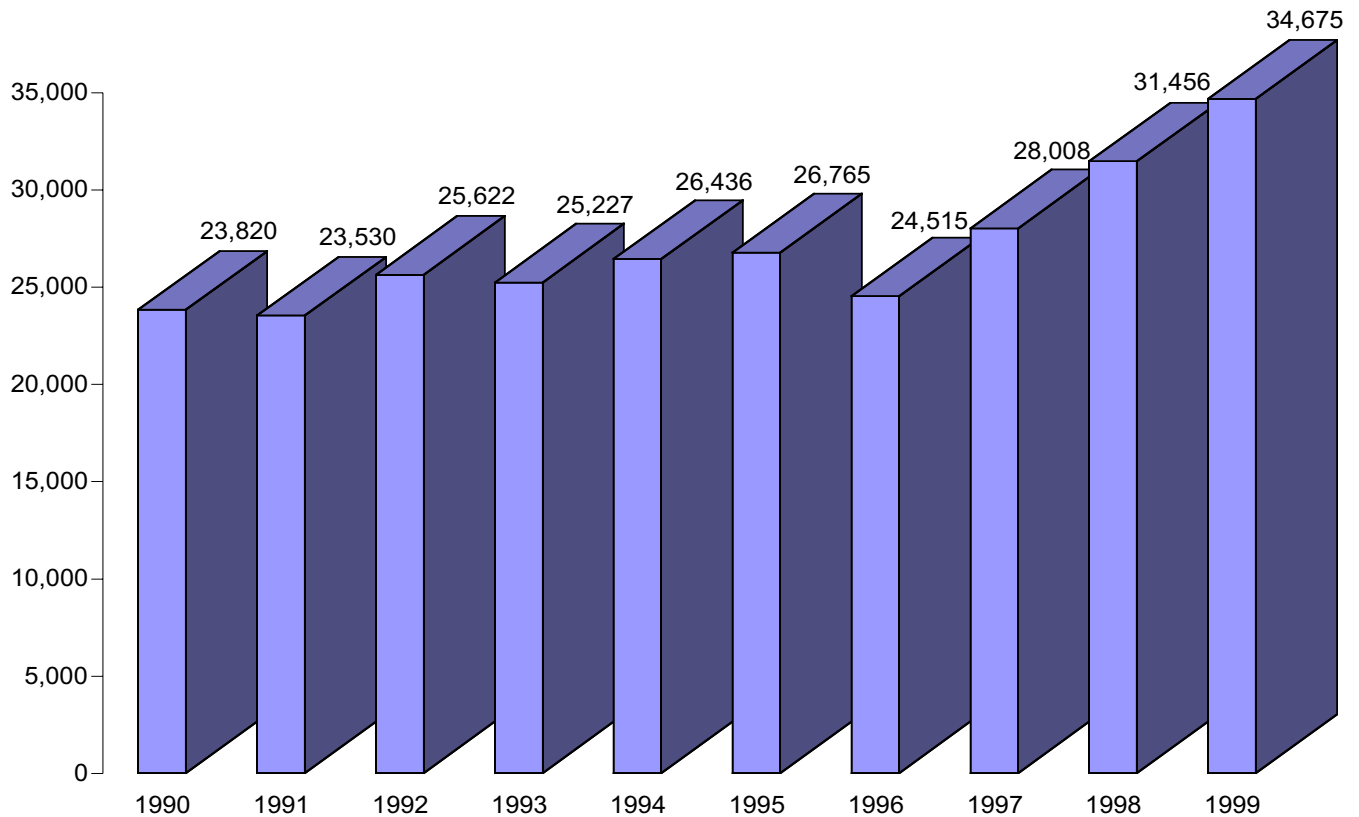
	<b>Physical Indicators</b>	<b>Behavioral Indicators</b>
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Unexplained bruises, welts, or burns in various stages of healing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Reflecting shape of article (electric cord, belt buckle, bite mark, cigarette burn)</li> <li>— Regularly appear after absence or vacation</li> </ul> Unexplained fractures, lacerations, or abrasions Injuries inconsistent with information from child	Wary of physical contact by adults Behavioral extremes—aggressive, withdrawn Complains of soreness or discomfort Wears clothing inappropriate to weather Reports injury by parents or others Arrives early at meetings or events and stays late, as if afraid to go home Chronically runs away (adolescents)
<b>Neglect</b>	Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene Consistent lack of supervision, especially for long periods Abandonment Unattended physical problems or medical needs	Beggars for or steals food Constant fatigue or listlessness Falls asleep during meetings Substance abuse Delinquency, self-destructive Frequently absent from or tardy to meetings or events Reports no caretaker at home
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Torn, stained, or bloody underclothes Difficulty walking or sitting Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia Pain or itching in genital area Venereal disease Pregnancy	Withdrawn, chronic depression Poor self-esteem Threatened by physical contact or closeness Inappropriate sexual behavior or premature knowledge of sex Reports sexual abuse by caretaker Poor peer relationships Suicide attempts (adolescents) Chronically runs away (adolescents)
<b>Emotional Maltreatment</b>	Speech disorders Delayed physical development Substance abuse Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies	Habit disorders (sucking, rocking) Antisocial, destructive Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play) Behavior extremes (passive or aggressive) Developmentally delayed mentally and emotionally Suicide attempts (adolescents)

*Child Abuse* (C1001), Washington State University Cooperative Extension. Chart adapted from Broadhurst, Diane D., “The Educator’s Role in the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect,” the Users’ Manual Series. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Washington, D.C. 1979, DREW No (Ohds 79-30172)

## Total Child Abuse/Neglect Reports

The Oregon State Office for Services to Children and Families (SCF) received 34,675 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in 1999.

### Total Child Abuse/Neglect Reports



- In 1999, SCF recorded 34,675 reports of suspected child abuse/neglect. In 1990, there were 23,820 reports of suspected child abuse/neglect. This is an increase of 45.6 percent. This continuing rise in reports, as well as the intensity of family problems, presents a challenge to SCF and community partners to meet the needs of today's children.
- During the same time period, Oregon's child population increased 15.2 percent.
- There were 8,073 founded child abuse/neglect reports in 1999, up 8.2 percent from 7,461 in 1998.



*A child is the only known substance from which a responsible adult can be made.*

*Lillian Larwood, assistant state Extension 4-H program leader; Virginia Bourdeau, Extension 4-H specialist; Elaine Husted, Extension 4-H agent, Grant County; David White, Extension 4-H agent, Deschutes County; Arlene Boileau, Extension 4-H agent, Jefferson County; and David Mitchell, Extension 4-H specialist; Oregon State University.*

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