

**GCCHM Leadership Certification  
Level IV, Course #6**

**PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE  
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(Presenter's Notes)**

**What Is Child Abuse?**

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

\*Purposely hurting a child by hitting, biting or shaking.

2. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

\*Crushing a child's spirit with threats or put-downs

**What is Child Abuse?**

2. SEXUAL ABUSE

\*Sexual contact with a child; using a child for sexual films or prostitution, obscene language.

\*NEGLECT

\*Failing to provide for a child's emotional needs (love, attention, etc.) or physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc); failing to offer supervision.

**Why Should I Learn About It?**

BECAUSE CHILD ABUSE HURTS EVERYONE

- Children suffer – The physical and emotional harm can last a lifetime.
- Society, suffers too – The cost in ruined lives & broken families can't be measured.
- But there's a lot you can do – Help prevent child abuse and limit the damage suffered by children & families.

**Abuse Takes a Tragic Toll On Children**

- Children Suffer Physically -- Abuse and neglect can lead to painful injuries and serious medical problems. In severe cases, the damage can lead to permanent disability, even death.
- Children Suffer Emotionally Too -- Children depend on adults for security, acceptance and guidance. When adults harm or neglect them, their world can seem uncertain and frightening.

**The Emotional Effects of Abuse Can Last A Lifetime**

## RESULTS CAN INCLUDE:

- Low Self-esteem -- Children naturally think that adults are always correct. So abused children may grow up believing they are bad and deserving of abuse.
- Problems with Feelings -- Emotional damage from abuse can stunt a child's emotional growth. Later in life, the child may be unable to show his or her feelings – or to understand other's feelings.

## Problems with Relationships

- Poor emotional development and lack of trust can make meaningful relationships difficult as an adult.
- Many adult abusers were abused as children. Victims of child abuse should seek help no matter how long ago the abuse occurred.

## Understanding People Who Abuse Children is Important to Understanding Child Abuse

- There is no “typical” child abuser
- They come from all economic, ethnic and social groups
  - \*Many are ordinary people -- They can include your neighbors, co-workers or relatives. Very few child abusers have severe mental illnesses.
  - \*Most know and love the children they abused -- Often children are abused by a parent, another relative or a family friend. It's less common for children to be abused by a stranger.

## Some Common Traits among people who abuse children include:

- Low Self-esteem – Many child abusers don't think very highly of themselves. They have feelings of failure and frustration.
- Poor Control over Emotions –many abusers are easily overwhelmed by their feelings.
- A history of being Abused –Remember, many child abusers were abused themselves earlier in life. They sometimes grow up thinking abuse is “normal.”
- There is hope for people who abuse children. With help, they can overcome the problems that lead to child abuse.

## Stress is a Major Factor in Child Abuse. Some Common Sources of Stress Include:

- FINANCIAL TROUBLES -- Limited financial resources can put great pressure on a family. A parent may see a child's needs as a reminder of his/ her “failure.”
- SOCIAL ISOLATION -- Without a support network of friends or relatives, the pressures of day-to-day living can pile up without relief.
- MARITAL PROBLEMS -- A strained marriage can erupt into child abuse.

## **More Sources of Stress**

- LACK OF PARENTING SKILLS -- Parents who know little about children may expect too much from them. When children can't meet unrealistic demands, they may become abusive.
- ILLNESS -- Illness in a household can create financial & emotional strain. Sick children may have special needs that are hard to meet.

## **There is No Excuse in Child Abuse**

- Abuse of alcohol and other drugs -- Drugs cripple a person's emotional control. In addition, drugs can lead to legal and financial troubles that cause more strain
- Stress is part of everyone's life -- And it's everyone's responsibility to find healthy ways to deal with stress – without hurting children.

## **Warning Signs of Child Abuse**

- If you spend time around children, be alert for:
  - \*Burns
  - \*Missing hair
  - \*Cuts or scrapes
- Physical signs
  - \*Bruises, welts or broken bones
  - \*Injury or medical condition that hasn't been properly treated
  - \*Injuries at different stages of healing
  - \*Injuries or redness around the genitals
- Child's appearance
  - \*Young children who are neglected or abused may be very dirty and poorly groomed.
  - \*Clothing may be in poor condition or not suited to the weather.

## **Child's Behavior**

Abuse can lead to major changes in behavior, such as:

- Aggressive or withdrawn behavior
- Unusual fears (of certain people, of going home, etc.)
- Craving for attention
- Fatigue
- Lack of concentration
- Hunger, begging for food, stealing
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school
- Unusual knowledge of sex

## **Adult's Behavior**

- Harshly punish the child in public
- Refer to child as “difficult,” “different” or “bad”
- Seem unconcerned about the child
- Give conflicting stories about injuries
- Become defensive when asked about the child's health

## **Children May Talk About Being Abused**

- Take what they say – and any suspicions you have – seriously.
- Signs like these don't always mean abuse. But it's best to find out for sure. Act now if you suspect or know of abuse.

## **About Reporting Child Abuse**

- Many people fear that reporting or admitting abuse will destroy a family
- The truth is, getting help can: -- Protect children from further harm. Help the family face and overcome its problems
- In severe cases -- Children may be removed from a home for their immediate safety. Proper treatment can help children & families return to healthier lives.

## **Take Action**

- Child abuse must be reported and addressed!
- If you are abusing a child, or know of someone who is, it's your responsibility to act.

## **Where To Get Help And Information**

- Hotlines (in your country) -- These offer emergency help, referral to area services, information about reporting, and more. In US look in the front of your phone book under “Community Service Numbers.” Or, call the Childhelp USA IOF Foresters National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453
- Family Service Agencies -- These may offer childcare, emergency shelter and other services. Look in the phone book and in the yellow pages under “Family Services” and “Social Services.”

## **More Help . . .**

- Child protective services --There are state agencies that handle child abuse reports and protect children. Call a hotline in your country.

- Support groups -- Parents anonymous, or other groups that offer support to parents.
- The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse is another valuable source of help and information. You can reach them at 1-312-663-3520. (USA)

### **Can Child Abuse Be Prevented?**

- Schools -- Schools have a responsibility to report known or suspected child abuse. They also have resources to help troubled Individuals and families.
- Neighbors & Families -- Friends and family members should reach out to those in need. Just offering to help with errands, baby-sitting, etc., can help relieve dangerous tension.
- Communities -- Special programs:
  - \*Education in parenting skills
  - \*Day-care services
  - \*Home-health visitors
  - \*Counseling and support
  - \*Many other programs

### **So– Child Abuse is a problem that concerns us all!**

- Understand the causes and effects of child abuse
- Learn to identify the warning signs that a child is being abused.
- Report any known or suspected case of child abuse
- Help prevent the tragedy of child abuse.