

# NewStart Preschool

## Parent Handbook

2018 - 2019



# Pre-School



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10141 North County Road  
Frisco, Texas 75033  
(214) 282 - 5576

## **NewStart Preschool Operational Policies:**

### **Welcome:**

We want to welcome you to our NewStart Preschool family. We are humbled to serve you and your family through our Preschool ministry. We see education as a team effort and are honored that you have chosen us to join you in giving your child a loving and nurturing environment to learn and grow. We hope you will feel right at home when you come into the preschool and will feel free to exchange information freely with us about your child to enhance his or her growth.

### **Mission Statement:**

NewStart Preschool, a Christian-based ministry of NewStart-Frisco Church of the Nazarene, is dedicated to building trusting relationships with its employees, students and their families, while providing care to students in an educational, safe and loving environment. We are committed to teaching and helping our students grow spiritually, socially, emotionally and academically.

### **Belief System:**

*"...Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10: 14, NIV)*

NewStart Preschool believes the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and we believe God has placed us in the Frisco community to love and guide children in the way of the Lord.

### **Core Values:**

Love and Nurture

**NewStart Preschool is a licensed child-care center with the State of Texas. We closely follow the minimum standards set forth by the DFPS.**

### **In this manual you will find information concerning:**

- Days of Operation & School Hours
- Release of Children
- Tuition
- Inclement Weather Policy
- Discipline & Guidance
- Suspension & Expulsion
- Dress
- School Supplies
- Medication & Medical Emergencies
- Sunscreen & Bug Spray
- Emergency Preparedness Plans
- Food Service Practices
- Procedures for handling illness
- Procedures for handling injury of a child
- Immunization
- Food Allergies
- Enrollment Procedures
- Teachers responsibilities and requirements
- General Information
- An overview of child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and reporting responsibility
- Should my child go to school today?
- Gang Free Zones & Child Abuse & Neglect from the State of Texas

**Days of operation:****Monday – Friday 9am – 3pm****Our school year is from September through May.**

We have a 2-day (Tues/Thurs), 3-day (Mon/Wed/Fri), and 5-day (Mon-Fri) care options.

In addition, we have extra care from 8am-9am and 3pm-5pm. Children must be signed up for extra care.

Preschool runs according to the 9-month FISS calendar for holidays and teacher in-service days. We start school 1 week after FISS and end school 1 week prior to FISS.

**Our School day:****Drop off is: 9 am to 9:30 am**

We begin our curriculum at 10:00 am. To make the most of your child's school day, please arrive before 10 am.

\*Children arriving after 10am will be admitted at the director's discretion.

If your child cries at drop off, it is best if you say a quick goodbye and leave. The teacher will help your child to transition into the school day. If your child continues to cry and is not consolable, we will contact you.

**Pick up is: 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm**

Children picked up after 3 pm will be given one warning then a \$10 fee for subsequent late pick ups. If a parent is more than 10 minutes late, the child will be placed in Extra Care at a rate of \$15/hour.

**Extended Hours**

We offer before and after school care. You must sign up and pay before your child stays in extended care.

**Release of Children:**

Children will only be released to parents or other adults that the parents have authorized prior to the pick up. We must have a copy of drivers licenses on file for all adults who are authorized for pick up. Please communicate to your child's teacher & the director if someone besides the child's parent is picking up so we can verify that we have a driver's license on file.

**Tuition payment:**

Tuition is due the first week of the month. Tuition may be paid in cash, check or money order. Late fees of \$25.00 will apply to children's tuition not collected on or by 1<sup>st</sup> week of each month. Student tuition not paid in full by the end of the month releases New Start Preschool from the care of said child.

**Inclement Weather:**

We follow FISS school calendar and with inclement weather closing and delays. We start at 10 am for a 2-hour delay.

**Discipline & Guidance:**

All discipline is to be handled by the teacher through redirection and positive reinforcement. This is a time where children are learning new skills in a structured educational environment, and NewStart Preschool provides a safe place for children to learn. Our focus is to shape future behavior.

The DFPS has set forth these minimum standards for all childcare centers that will be followed:

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of child. Punishment of children is prohibited. Examples of Punishment:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age, including requiring a child to remain in a restrictive device.

*DFPS Minimum Standards: 746.2805 Subchapter L*

### **Suspension & Expulsion:**

Challenging behaviors exhibited by preschool children will be addressed with the goal to teach, nurture, and encourage positive social behaviors. NewStart Preschool seeks to involve families, administrators, teachers, and counselors so that all children succeed in school.

For the safety of all children at the NewStart Preschool, if a child continues to behave in a way that endangers or harms himself or others after NewStart Preschool has provided the child's parents with at least one written warning of the unacceptable behavior and has documented attempts at teaching the child alternate behavior, then the child will be suspended and/or expelled from NewStart Preschool. The length of time of suspension and/or expulsion is left to the discretion of the director, and the terms of returning will be discussed with the child's parents at the time of suspension and/or expulsion.

### **Dress:**

Your child will be engaged with materials such as sand, water, paint, markers, food, etc., and they will need to wear clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. For safety purposes on the playground, children should wear **closed toe shoes** with a strap behind the ankle. Tennis shoes are preferred. Clothing should be comfortable and allow for movement during play, and clothing should be easy to remove for toileting purposes. Please be advised that children will not be permitted to play on the play structure if they are wearing inappropriate footwear or clothing.

### **School Supplies:**

- Backpack – large enough to hold lunchbox, change of clothes, water bottle, and school papers.
- Lunch box
- Water bottle
- Nap mat – all in one with the pillow and blanket attached
- Change of clothes in a Ziploc bag (with their name on it)



### **Medications & Medical Emergencies:**

We prefer not to give medications to children in our care. However, if it is necessary, please ask for the paperwork that gives us permission to administer medication. Prescription medications must be in the current prescription bottle, labeled with the child's name. Over the counter medications must also be labeled with the child's name, and required paperwork must also be completed. Parents may not authorize a medication to be administered in excess of the label instructions or the directions of the child's health care professional.

Medication will be locked in the office area.

If your child has a minor injury while at school, you will receive a phone call to let you know what happened. The teacher will also inform you upon pick up.

In case of medical emergency, we will contact 911, administer 1<sup>st</sup> aid or CPR then contact the child's parent. Please be sure your contact information is always current.

If your child is injured and requires medical attention or is has been in a situation that places them in risk (*such as wandering off the preschool property unsupervised*), an Incident/Illness report will be filled out and given to you to sign.

### **Sunscreen & Bug Spray:**

We ask that you apply bug spray and sunscreen on days your children need it prior to drop off. Sunscreen will be reapplied prior to outside playtimes on sunny days that exceed 15 minutes. Bug spray will be applied to children going outside to play when temperatures exceed 79 degrees.

We use bug spray that is made of essential oils (*such as Burt's Bees, Badger & All Terrain*). We also use natural zinc oxide sunscreen (*such as Badger, Nature's Gate*).

If you would like us to use your sunscreen, please put your child's name on it and give it to the teacher.

We do not use sprays directly on the children. All sprays should be put into an adult's palm before applying to child. Sprays are not healthy for children to breathe.

### **Emergency Preparedness Plans:**

- Evacuation – in the event that the inside of our building becomes unsafe, (*fire*) we will safely move the children to the concrete pad on the playground area. Parents will be contacted once the children are in the safe zone.
- Relocation – in the event of imminent danger rendering the inside & outside of the building unsafe (*flooding*) the children will be safely moved across 1<sup>st</sup> street to FISS Natatorium.
- Sheltering – in the event of a tornado or other immediate or imminent situation rendering partial areas of indoor space unsafe & exiting the operation unsafe, the children will be moved to the north bathroom and south hallway of the preschool building. Children will be instructed to cover their head and neck placing their head between their knees until the all clear is given by the emergency broadcast system.
- Lock-Down – in the event of a dangerous person, a lock down announcement will be made. Teachers will safely locate children in their classroom, closing their blinds and doors. In the case the dangerous person is inside the building, the door to the building will be unlocked. If the dangerous person is outside of the building the door will be locked and children will be kept away from doors and windows.

All unaccompanied persons on campus will have prior background check and clearing in order to be present during the hours of 8am-5pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. In the event a person trespasses onto our campus, police will be called without hesitation.

There are 2 Emergency Binders located in the school, one by each door. These contain detailed instructions for emergency response as well as class lists, parent contact info and emergency numbers. You may ask to review these binders at any time.

### **Food Service Practices:**

NewStart Preschool will not prepare food. Children will bring a packed lunch from home. The school provides morning snacks with water & an afterschool snack if the child stays past 3pm. Teachers cannot leave their classroom to heat children's lunches.

### **Illness:**

Children who have an illness that prevents them from participating comfortably in preschool activities (including outside play) should stay home. Children should also stay home if they have a temperature of 100 degrees or more (without medication to lower fever) or if they have uncontrollable diarrhea/diarrhea that cannot be contained within the diaper. Children should be free of symptoms (fever, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.) for 24 hours prior to coming to school.

If a child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, please bring a doctor's note clearing the child to return to Preschool.

If your child becomes sick at school, we will call you to pick your child up.

*See Should My Child Go to School Today?*

### **Injury:**

If a child is injured and requires medical attention, an incident report will be filled out, signed by the parent and placed in the child's file. Other injuries will be reported to the parent or guardian by written or verbal communication from the director or teacher.

### **Immunizations:**

Each child enrolled or admitted to NewStart Preschool must meet and continue to meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) or provide the state's notarized exemption affidavit. This affidavit can be obtained at: <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco> Immunization records in your child's file need to remain current, including immunization exemptions and exceptions.

(a) A child may be exempt from immunization requirements for a medical reason or reason of conscience, including a religious belief. To claim an exemption, the person applying for the child's admission must meet criteria specified by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) rule at 25 TAC §97.62 (relating to Exclusions from Compliance).

(b) For some diseases, a child who previously had a disease and is accordingly naturally immune from it may qualify for an exception to the immunization requirements for the disease. To claim this exception, the person applying for the child's admission must meet the criteria specified by the DSHS rule at 25 TAC §97.65 (relating to Exceptions to Immunization Requirements). *You can find more information regarding the Department of State Health Services' exemptions at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/default.shtm>, click on "School Requirements", click on "Main Page", and to the right of the page click on "Exclusions from Immunization Requirements".*

### **Food Allergy**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 4 in 100 children have a food allergy.

As the prevalence of children who have food allergies increases, so have the number of hospitalizations.

Food allergy is a potentially serious immune response to eating specific foods or food additives. Eight types of food account for over 90% of allergic reactions in affected individuals: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat. Reactions to these foods by an allergic person can range from a tingling sensation around the mouth and lips and hives to death, depending on the severity of the allergy.

- Any child with a diagnosed food allergy must have a “Food Allergy Emergency Plan” prepared by the child’s health care professional. This plan must be signed and dated by a health care professional and the parent and turned in with the admission paper work prior to the child’s first day of school.

### **Enrollment procedures:**

Children are enrolled on a first come, first serve basis. Siblings of children previously enrolled are given opportunity to enroll one week prior to open enrollment.

Parents will be notified by postings and emails of policy or procedure changes.

Parents must provide a signed a notice of health from the child’s pediatrician, stating that child is in good health to participate in our program. If the child has a diagnosed food allergy, a Food Allergy Emergency Plan must be on file prior to admission.

Children 4 years or older must obtain a vision and hearing test signed by a physician in order to be enrolled.

### **Minimal Teacher Responsibilities and Requirements:**

- Maintaining a current, growing relationship with God and exhibiting good moral character
- Signing children in and out
- Decorating classroom and changing decorations monthly
- Dressing professionally, yet comfortable enough to get on the floor with the children
- Teaching the outlined curriculum with room for creativity
- Supervising children at all times
- Providing a nurturing Christian environment for children to grow and learn
- Maintaining a clean classroom
- CPR and First Aid training, Background checks and Fingerprinting
- Continuing Education 24 hours per year in: Child Growth & Development, Guidance & Discipline, Children with Special Needs, Teacher Child Interaction, Prevention, Recognition & Reporting Abuse, Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, Safe Sleep for Infants, SIDS, etc.
- High School Diploma
- Annual training in health & sanitation requirements

### **General information:**

- Parents may breastfeed or provide breast milk for your child while they are in the care of NewStart Preschool. If you wish to breastfeed, please let us know and we will provide you with a comfortable place.
- Parents may review and discuss with the child-care director any questions or concerns about the policies and procedures of the child-care center.
- Parents may visit the child-care center anytime without prior approval but will need to be accompanied by a teacher or director.
- Parents may review a copy of the minimum standards and the Licensing inspection report.
- Parents may contact the Licensing office at 469-229-6900 or the Child Abuse Neglect Hotline at 800-252-5400. WWW.DFPS.STATE.TX.US

### **Child Abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse:**

All employees of NewStart Preschool will receive at least 1 hour each year in Preventing & Responding to Abuse & Neglect of Children. Employees of NewStart Preschool are required to report any signs of child abuse or neglect to the director and the Department of Family & Protective Services.

See additional information from Helpguide.org at the back of these Guidelines.

**Gang Free Zone:** Gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1,000 feet of NewStart Preschool is a violation of Texas law (71.028 and 71.029) and is subject to increased penalty under state law.

# Should My Child Go to School Today?

## ***CHECK THIS SYMPTOM LIST TO FIND OUT!***

The following guide was adapted from Dr. Steven Parker, MD, director, division of behavioral and developmental pediatrics, Boston Medical Center; associate professor, pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine. Symptom by symptom, here are Dr. Parker's guidelines to help you decide whether your child should stay home from school:

- **FEVER:**

A child's temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher **MUST** stay at home or will be sent home if already at school. Please **DO NOT** give them fever-reducing medication and send them to school. Children with fever are contagious and will easily spread their illness to others. While at home, encourage your child to drink plenty of liquids. Your child's temperature **MUST** be under 100.0 for a full 24 hours (without medicine like Tylenol or Motrin) before returning to school.

- **MILD COUGH/RUNNY NOSE:**

If there's no fever, and the child feels well enough to participate in school activities he/she may attend school at your discretion.

- **BAD COUGH/COLD SYMPTOMS:**

Children with bad coughs need to stay home, and possibly see a doctor. It could be a severe cold or possibly bronchitis, flu, or pneumonia. But when the cough improves, and the child is feeling better, they may come back to school.

- **DIARRHEA AND/OR VOMITING:**

Keep your child home until the illness is over, and for 24 hours after the last episode (without medicine). A child must be able to keep down 2 solid (regular food, not just crackers and Sprite/Gatorade) meals without vomiting, diarrhea, or fever before returning to school. They should not return to school if they have diarrhea that causes them to soil their pants or cannot be contained in the diaper.

- **SORE THROAT:**

A minor sore throat is usually not a problem, but a severe sore throat could be strep throat even if there is no fever. Other symptoms of strep throat in children are headache and stomach upset. Keep your child home from school, and contact a doctor. Your child needs a special test called a "throat culture" to determine if it is strep throat. He or she can return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins as long as they do not have a fever and have a doctor's note.

- **EARACHE:**

The child needs to see a doctor.

- **PINK EYE (CONJUNCTIVITIS):**

Keep the child home until a doctor has given the OK to return to school. Pink eye is highly contagious and most cases are caused by a virus, which will not respond to an antibiotic. Bacterial conjunctivitis will require an antibiotic; your doctor will be able to determine if this is the case.

- **RASH:**

Children with a skin rash should see a doctor, as this could be one of several infectious diseases. One possibility is impetigo, a bacterial skin infection that is very contagious and requires antibiotic treatment. Also, fifth disease is a contagious viral illness spread by coughs and sneezes; it's no longer contagious by the time rash appears. If your child has a chronic rash, such as eczema, and the eczema does not appear to be infected, your child can come to school.

## The following is information regarding Child Abuse & Neglect from the State of Texas:

### Child Abuse Hotlines:

- To get help or report abuse in the US or Canada, call the [Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](https://www.childhelp.org/) at **1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)**.
- Or visit [ChiWorld.org](https://www.chiworld.org/) for a list of international child helplines.

### Understanding child abuse and neglect

Child abuse is more than bruises or broken bones. While physical abuse is shocking due to the scars it leaves, not all child abuse is as obvious. Ignoring children's needs, putting them in unsupervised, dangerous situations, or making a child feel worthless or stupid are also child abuse. Regardless of the type of child abuse, the result is serious emotional harm.

### Myths and facts about child abuse and neglect

- **MYTH #1: It's only abuse if it's violent.**

**Fact:** Physical abuse is just one type of child abuse. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.

- **MYTH #2: Only bad people abuse their children.**

**Fact:** While it's easy to say that only "bad people" abuse their children, it's not always so black and white. Not all abusers are intentionally harming their children. Many have been victims of abuse themselves, and don't know any other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.

- **MYTH #3: Child abuse doesn't happen in "good" families.**

**Fact:** Child abuse doesn't only happen in poor families or bad neighborhoods. It crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. Sometimes, families who seem to have it all from the outside are hiding a different story behind closed doors.

- **MYTH #4: Most child abusers are strangers.**

**Fact:** While abuse by strangers does happen, most abusers are family members or others close to the family.

- **MYTH #5: Abused children always grow up to be abusers.**

**Fact:** It is true that abused children are more likely to repeat the cycle as adults, unconsciously repeating what they experienced as children. On the other hand, many adult survivors of child abuse have a strong motivation to protect their children against what they went through and become excellent parents.

### Effects of child abuse and neglect

All types of child abuse and neglect leave lasting scars. Some of these scars might be physical, but emotional scarring has long lasting effects throughout life, damaging a child's sense of self, ability to have healthy relationships, and ability to function at home, at work and at school. Some effects include:

- **Lack of trust and relationship difficulties.** If you can't trust your parents, who can you trust? Abuse by a primary caregiver damages the most fundamental relationship as a child—that you will safely, reliably get your physical and emotional needs met by the person who is responsible for your care. Without this base, it is very difficult to learn to trust people or know who is trustworthy. This can lead to difficulty maintaining relationships due to fear of being controlled or abused. It can also lead to unhealthy relationships because the adult doesn't know what a good relationship is.
- **Core feelings of being "worthless" or "damaged."** If you've been told over and over again as a child that you are stupid or no good, it is very difficult to overcome these core feelings. You may experience them as reality. Adults may not strive for more education, or settle for a job that may not pay enough, because they don't believe they can do it or are worth more. Sexual abuse survivors, with the stigma and shame surrounding the abuse, often especially struggle with a feeling of being damaged.
- **Trouble regulating emotions.** Abused children cannot express emotions safely. As a result, the emotions get stuffed down, coming out in unexpected ways. Adult survivors of child abuse can struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression, or anger. They may turn to alcohol or drugs to numb out the painful feelings.

### Types of child abuse

There are several types of child abuse, but the core element that ties them together is the emotional effect on the child. Children need predictability, structure, clear boundaries, and the knowledge that their parents are looking out for their safety. Abused children cannot predict how their parents will act. Their world is an unpredictable, frightening place with no rules. Whether the abuse is a slap, a harsh comment, stony silence, or not knowing if there will be dinner on the table tonight, the end result is a child that feel unsafe, uncared for, and alone.

#### Emotional child abuse

Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me? Contrary to this old saying, emotional abuse can severely damage a child's mental health or social development, leaving lifelong psychological scars. Examples of emotional child abuse include:



- Constant belittling, shaming, and humiliating a child.
- Calling names and making negative comparisons to others.
- Telling a child he or she is “no good,” “worthless,” “bad,” or “a mistake.”
- Frequent yelling, threatening, or bullying.
- Ignoring or rejecting a child as punishment, giving him or her the silent treatment.
- Limited physical contact with the child—no hugs, kisses, or other signs of affection.
- Exposing the child to violence or the abuse of others, whether it be the abuse of a parent, a sibling, or even a pet.

### **Child neglect**

Child neglect—a very common type of child abuse—is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, or supervision. Child neglect is not always easy to spot. Sometimes, a parent might become physically or mentally unable to care for a child, such as with a serious injury, untreated depression, or anxiety. Other times, alcohol or drug abuse may seriously impair judgment and the ability to keep a child safe.

Older children might not show outward signs of neglect, becoming used to presenting a competent face to the outside world, and even taking on the role of the parent. But at the end of the day, neglected children are not getting their physical and emotional needs met.

### **Physical child abuse**

Physical abuse involves physical harm or injury to the child. It may be the result of a deliberate attempt to hurt the child, but not always. It can also result from severe discipline, such as using a belt on a child, or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or physical condition.

Many physically abusive parents and caregivers insist that their actions are simply forms of discipline—ways to make children learn to behave. But there is a big difference between using physical punishment to discipline and physical abuse. The point of disciplining children is to teach them right from wrong, not to make them live in fear.

#### **Physical abuse vs. Discipline**

In physical abuse, unlike physical forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

- **Unpredictability.** The child never knows what is going to set the parent off. There are no clear boundaries or rules. The child is constantly walking on eggshells, never sure what behavior will trigger a physical assault.
- **Lashing out in anger.** Physically abusive parents act out of anger and the desire to assert control, not the motivation to lovingly teach the child. The angrier the parent, the more intense the abuse.
- **Using fear to control behavior.** Parents who are physically abusive may believe that their children need to fear them in order to behave, so they use physical abuse to “keep their child in line.” However, what children are really learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave or grow as individuals.

### **Child sexual abuse: A hidden type of abuse**

#### **Help for child sexual abuse:**

**1-888-PREVENT** (1-888-773-8368) [Stop It Now](#)

**1-800-656-HOPE** [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#)

Or visit [ChiWorld.org](#) for a list of other international child helplines

Child sexual abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. It's important to recognize that sexual abuse doesn't always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved.

While news stories of sexual predators are scary, what is even more frightening is that sexual abuse usually occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust—most often close relatives. And contrary to what many believe, it's not just girls who are at risk. Boys and girls both suffer from sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse of boys may be underreported due to shame and stigma.

#### **The problem of shame and guilt in child sexual abuse**

Aside from the physical damage that sexual abuse can cause, the emotional component is powerful and far-reaching. Sexually abused children are tormented by shame and guilt. They may feel that they are responsible for the abuse or somehow brought it upon themselves. This can lead to self-loathing and sexual problems as they grow older—often either excessive promiscuity or an inability to have intimate relations.

The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward. They may worry that others won't believe them, will be angry with them, or that it will split their family apart. Because of these difficulties, false accusations of sexual abuse are not common, so if a child confides in you, take him or her seriously. Don't turn a blind eye!

## Warning signs of child abuse and neglect

The earlier child abuse is caught, the better the chance of recovery and appropriate treatment for the child. Child abuse is not always obvious. By learning some of the common warning signs of child abuse and neglect, you can catch the problem as early as possible and get both the child and the abuser the help that they need.

Of course, just because you see a warning sign doesn't automatically mean a child is being abused. It's important to dig deeper, looking for a pattern of abusive behavior and warning signs, if you notice something off.

### Warning signs of emotional abuse in children

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.
- Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).
- Doesn't seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, throwing tantrums).

### Warning signs of physical abuse in children

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.
- Is always watchful and "on alert," as if waiting for something bad to happen.
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt.
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.

### Warning signs of neglect in children

- Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather.
- Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor).
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations and environments.
- Is frequently late or missing from school.

### Warning signs of sexual abuse in children

- Trouble walking or sitting.
- Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior.
- Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.
- An STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14.
- Runs away from home.

### Child abuse and reactive attachment disorder

Severe abuse early in life can lead to reactive attachment disorder. Children with this disorder are so disrupted that they have extreme difficulty establishing normal relationships and attaining normal developmental milestones. They need special treatment and support.

### Risk factors for child abuse and neglect

While child abuse and neglect occurs in all types of families—even in those that look happy from the outside—children are at a much greater risk in certain situations.

- **Domestic violence.** Witnessing domestic violence is terrifying to children and emotionally abusive. Even if the mother does her best to protect her children and keeps them from being physically abused, the situation is still extremely damaging. If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship, getting out is the best thing for protecting the children.
- **Alcohol and drug abuse.** Living with an alcoholic or addict is very difficult for children and can easily lead to abuse and neglect. Parents who are drunk or high are unable to care for their children, make good parenting decisions, and control often-dangerous impulses. Substance abuse also commonly leads to physical abuse.
- **Untreated mental illness.** Parents who suffering from depression, an anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, or another mental illness have trouble taking care of themselves, much less their children. A mentally ill or traumatized parent may be distant and withdrawn from his or her children, or quick to anger without understanding why. Treatment for the caregiver means better care for the children.

- **Lack of parenting skills.** Some caregivers never learned the skills necessary for good parenting. Teen parents, for example, might have unrealistic expectations about how much care babies and small children need. Or parents who were themselves victims of child abuse may only know how to raise their children the way they were raised. In such cases, parenting classes, therapy, and caregiver support groups are great resources for learning better parenting skills.
- **Stress and lack of support.** Parenting can be a very time-intensive, difficult job, especially if you're raising children without support from family, friends, or the community or you're dealing with relationship problems or financial difficulties. Caring for a child with a disability, special needs, or difficult behaviors is also a challenge. It's important to get the support you need, so you are emotionally and physically able to support your child.

### Recognizing abusive behavior in yourself

#### If you need professional help...

Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? In the U.S., call **1-800-4-A-CHILD** to find support and resources in your community that can help you break the cycle of abuse.

Do you see yourself in some of these descriptions, painful as it may be? Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? Raising children is one of life's greatest challenges and can trigger anger and frustration in the most even tempered. If you grew up in a household where screaming and shouting or violence was the norm, you may not know any other way to raise your kids.

Recognizing that you have a problem is the biggest step to getting help. If you yourself were raised in an abusive situation, that can be extremely difficult. Children experience their world as normal. It may have been normal in your family to be slapped or pushed for little to no reason, or that mother was too drunk to cook dinner. It may have been normal for your parents to call you stupid, clumsy, or worthless. Or it may have been normal to watch your mother get beaten up by your father.

It is only as adults that we have the perspective to step back and take a hard look at what is normal and what is abusive. Read the above sections on the types of abuse and warning signs. Do any of those ring a bell for you now? Or from when you were a child? The following is a list of warning signs that you may be crossing the line into abuse:

#### How do you know when you've crossed the line?

- **You can't stop the anger.** What starts as a swat on the backside may turn into multiple hits getting harder and harder. You may shake your child harder and harder and finally throw him or her down. You find yourself screaming louder and louder and can't stop yourself.
- **You feel emotionally disconnected from your child.** You may feel so overwhelmed that you don't want anything to do with your child. Day after day, you just want to be left alone and for your child to be quiet.
- **Meeting the daily needs of your child seems impossible.** While everyone struggles with balancing dressing, feeding, and getting kids to school or other activities, if you continually can't manage to do it, it's a sign that something might be wrong.
- **Other people have expressed concern.** It may be easy to bristle at other people expressing concern. However, consider carefully what they have to say. Are the words coming from someone you normally respect and trust? Denial is not an uncommon reaction.

### Breaking the cycle of child abuse

If you have a history of child abuse, having your own children can trigger strong memories and feelings that you may have repressed. This may happen when a child is born, or at later ages when you remember specific abuse to you. You may be shocked and overwhelmed by your anger, and feel like you can't control it. But you can learn new ways to manage your emotions and break your old patterns.

Remember, you are the most important person in your child's world. It's worth the effort to make a change, and you don't have to go it alone. Help and support are available.

#### Tips for changing your reactions

- **Learn what is age appropriate and what is not.** Having realistic expectations of what children can handle at certain ages will help you avoid frustration and anger at normal child behavior. For example, newborns are not going to sleep through the night without a peep, and toddlers are not going to be able to sit quietly for extended periods of time.
- **Develop new parenting skills.** While learning to control your emotions is critical, you also need a game plan of what you are going to do instead. Start by learning appropriate discipline techniques and how to set clear boundaries for your children. Parenting classes, books, and seminars are a way to get this information. You can also turn to other parents for tips and advice.
- **Take care of yourself.** If you are not getting enough rest and support or you're feeling overwhelmed, you are much more likely to succumb to anger. Sleep deprivation, common in parents of young children, adds to moodiness and irritability—exactly what you are trying to avoid.
- **Get professional help.** Breaking the cycle of abuse can be very difficult if the patterns are strongly entrenched. If you can't seem to stop yourself no matter how hard you try, it's time to get help, be it therapy, parenting classes, or other interventions. Your children will thank you for it.

- **Learn how you can get your emotions under control.** The first step to getting your emotions under control is realizing that they are there. If you were abused as a child, you may have an especially difficult time getting in touch with your range of emotions. You may have had to deny or repress them as a child, and now they spill out without your control. For a step by step process on how you can develop your emotional intelligence, visit EQ Central.

### **Helping an abused or neglected child**

What should you do if you suspect that a child has been abused? How do you approach him or her? Or what if a child comes to you? It's normal to feel a little overwhelmed and confused in this situation. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about.

Just remember, you can make a tremendous difference in the life of an abused child, especially if you take steps to stop the abuse early. When talking with an abused child, the best thing you can provide is calm reassurance and unconditional support. Let your actions speak for you if you're having trouble finding the words. Remember that talking about the abuse may be very difficult for the child. It's your job to reassure the child and provide whatever help you can.

### **Tips for talking to an abused child**

- **Avoid denial and remain calm.** A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, if you display denial to a child, or show shock or disgust at what they are saying, the child may be afraid to continue and will shut down. As hard as it may be, remain as calm and reassuring as you can.
- **Don't interrogate.** Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't interrogate the child or ask leading questions. This may confuse and fluster the child and make it harder for them to continue their story.
- **Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong.** It takes a lot for a child to come forward about abuse. Reassure him or her that you take what is said seriously, and that it is not the child's fault.
- **Safety comes first.** If you feel that your safety or the safety of the child would be threatened if you try to intervene, leave it to the professionals. You may be able to provide more support later after the initial professional intervention.

### **Reporting child abuse and neglect**

If you suspect a child is being abused, it's critical to get them the help he or she needs. Reporting child abuse seems so official. Many people are reluctant to get involved in other families' lives.

Understanding some of the myths behind reporting may help put your mind at ease if you need to report child abuse

- **I don't want to interfere in someone else's family.** The effects of child abuse are lifelong, affecting future relationships, self-esteem, and sadly putting even more children at risk of abuse as the cycle continues. Help break the cycle of child abuse.
- **What if I break up someone's home?** The priority in child protective services is keeping children in the home. A child abuse report does not mean a child is automatically removed from the home - unless the child is clearly in danger. Support such as parenting classes, anger management or other resources may be offered first to parents if safe for the child.
- **They will know it was me who called.** Reporting is anonymous. In most states, you do not have to give your name when you report child abuse. The child abuser cannot find out who made the report of child abuse.
- **It won't make a difference what I have to say.** If you have a gut feeling that something is wrong, it is better to be safe than sorry. Even if you don't see the whole picture, others may have noticed as well, and a pattern can help identify child abuse that might have otherwise slipped through the cracks.