

What is Child Abuse?

SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

Children of all ages do things that make parents feel angry and frustrated. But it is important to make sure this anger doesn't result in hurting a child.

The laws about raising children in Australia are made to protect children from abuse from their parents. These laws are not targeted at refugee families only.

Each year in Australia many children are hurt, often seriously, in some way by their parents. This is a problem throughout Australian society and is called 'child abuse'.

Australia supports a United Nations agreement that children are protected from all forms of abuse.

Abuse may be sexual, physical and emotional.

Sexual abuse is when an adult involves a child under the age of 16 in any sexual activity at all. This is a crime in Australia.

Physical abuse is when parents use excessive physical punishment with their child. This includes when parents hit or beat a child with a fist, stick, belt or other object. Physical abuse could also be burning with a cigarette, trying to strangle or roughly shaking a child.

People sometimes confuse 'discipline' with 'physical punishment', but they really are quite different. Discipline is about teaching children how to control and change their behaviour. It builds responsibility by encouraging children to think for themselves.

Physical punishment is trying to change the behaviour of a child by causing them pain. It does not change behaviour in the long term.



Hitting teaches children that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.

Another kind of abuse is **psychological or emotional abuse**. This is when a parent does or says something many times that affects the confidence and self esteem of a child.

Threatening a child, saying negative things all the time or not showing love and care could be seen as emotional abuse.

Also, if a child witnesses domestic violence in the home this may be emotional abuse.

Neglect is when a parent fails to provide a child with the basic things needed for growth and development such as food, education, hygiene and supervision.

If you hurt your child in these ways, the Department of Communities, Child Safety Services may contact you, your child or your child's school to find out if your child is safe.

Some parents wonder why the government intervenes in family affairs in Australia. It is the law that the government becomes involved if somebody reports their worries about a child being hurt by their parents.

Research shows that children who have been abused by their parents may have more difficulty with school work, self-control, self-image and making friends.

They may also act more disobedient and aggressive.

There are many other ways to discipline your children positively that doesn't involve hitting, shouting or intimidating. Some of these ways include more talking, understanding and negotiating.



Remember parenting is difficult and you may need to ask for some help when you don't have your large family nearby.

There are some organisations providing different parenting programs to help you to gain extra skills in managing yourself and your family.

All children deserve a safe, healthy and happy childhood.



Here is a list of some places you can ask for help:

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS)

131 450

Interpreting service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week .

Parentline

(07) 3858 5371

1300 30 1300 (8am-10pm, 7 days)

A telephone counselling service for parents

Qld Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT)

(07) 3391 6677

Programs to support families with intergenerational and intercultural conflict through counselling, groups and information.

Kids Help Line

1800 551 800

Telephone counseling for young people aged between 5 and 25 years old.

Department of Communities Child Safety Services

1800 811 810

1800 177 135 After Hours

Responds to concerns about child protection matters

Community Child Health Services – Child Health Line

13 HEALTH (13 432584)

1800 177 279

Child Health Line – 24/7 telephone service for Queensland families.

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)

1800 050 009

Free DVD available: 'Raising Children in Australia; for parents of young children in Australia' (in 10 African languages)

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