

What happens when abuse has been reported?

A team is set up to handle the report. There will be a child protection social worker from Child Youth and Family who has the job of ensuring that the child or young person is safe. There will be a member of the Police Child Protection Team, who will investigate whether an offence has been committed and find out who is responsible. They will talk to the young person involved and decide whether a prosecution is desirable. They should also keep you informed about what is happening. You can ask for information.

Remember

Abuse is wrong and it must be stopped.

Abuse is never the victim's fault.

Victims can be anybody - males, females, babies, children, adults.

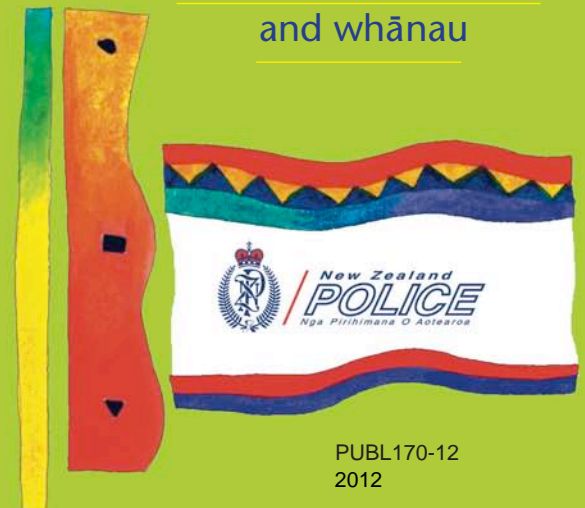
Offenders can be anyone, even people you know and love.

Nobody deserves to be abused.



Are Your Kids Safe?

A KOS pamphlet
for parents, caregivers
and whānau



What is Child Abuse?

There are four types of child abuse:



Physical Abuse - non-accidental injuries from beatings, assaults and attacks, for example being thrown against a wall, burnt with a cigarette or beaten with a jug cord or belt.

Sexual Abuse - forced sexual contact or sexual contact inappropriate for the child's age. This is often by someone in authority or someone the child trusts.

Neglect - failing to give children or young people adequate food, shelter, clothing, love or medical care - that is the necessities of life.

Emotional Abuse - failing to provide a warm emotional upbringing. It could include rejecting or ignoring the child or young person, verbal abuse or constant putdowns, and/or a lack of affection.

Family Violence - this can involve all the above types of abuse, it damages children as victims and witnesses.

Who abuses children and young people?

- Abuse can happen anywhere - in rural and urban areas, any suburb, and at all status levels of society.
- Abusers can be men and women.
- The abuser is often someone who is known to the child, such as a member of the family or a family friend.
- The abuser could be any age, from an elderly person to someone the same age as the victim.

How are children and young people affected by abuse?

Children and young people who have been abused may:

- have ongoing health problems;
- be mentally or physically damaged;
- feel that they are worthless;
- be sad, anxious, depressed and angry, or feel isolated;
- have difficulty getting on with, or trusting other people;
- find it hard to concentrate and work at school;
- be depressed and suicidal.

How do you know if a child is being abused?

It is not easy to tell if a child is being abused, as the signs and symptoms could be caused by some other problem.

However, the abused child may:

- have a sudden change in behaviour or personality;
- have an unexplained sadness, crankiness or irritability;
- change the way they react to other people;
- lose interest in school work;
- give out hints about the abuse;
- have sexual knowledge or behaviour that is too grown up for them;
- be reluctant to undress;
- draw sexual pictures;
- have unexplained physical injuries.



Look for changes in your child's behaviour that cannot be explained.

What can a parent or caregiver do to keep their child safe?

- Have sensible family safety guidelines.
- Tell your child you love them and find ways to make them feel good about themselves.
- Respect your child's feelings.
- Make it easy for your child to talk to you and tell you about anything that is bothering them.
- Listen carefully to what your child is saying. They are unlikely to tell you directly that they are being abused so you may need to read between the lines.
- Keep the computer in a family room and have clear guidelines about its use.

What should you do if a child tells you about abuse, or if you suspect that a child is being abused?

- Show your love, concern and support.
- Keep any feelings you might have, such as anger, fear or disgust, to yourself.
- Keep calm.
- Listen carefully to what they are saying.
- Believe what they tell you.
- Don't interrogate your child about what has happened.
- Reassure them that it is not their fault.
- Tell them that you are pleased that they have told you and that you are very sorry about what has happened.
- Assure them you will do something to help.
- Seek help and advice.



Report the abuse to either your local Police or to the Child Youth and Family Service. You will find their phone numbers in your telephone book.