

# Protecting Our Little Ones

Early Detection of Child Abuse in  
Preschool Settings

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# Objectives:

<b>Understand</b>	Understand what constitutes child abuse and neglect.
<b>Recognize</b>	Recognize early signs of abuse in preschool children.
<b>Learn</b>	Learn strategies for reporting and intervening.
<b>Build</b>	Build collaboration between parents and teachers for a safe environment.



## What is Child Abuse & Neglect?



Abuse

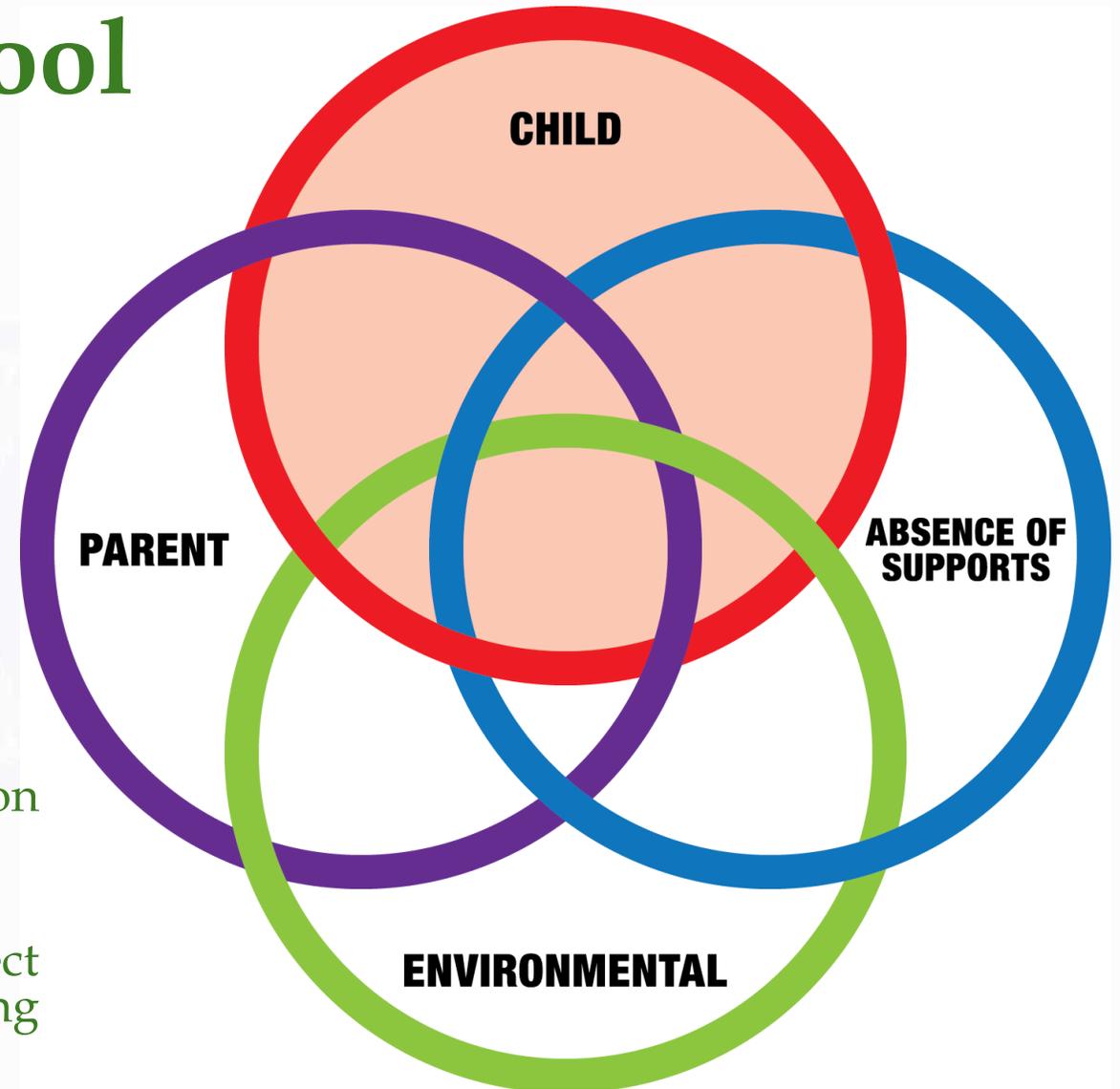


# Type of Abuse

	Definition	Example	
<b>Physical</b>	Intentional physical harm	Hitting or burning	
<b>Emotional</b>	Harm to emotional well-being	Constant criticism	
<b>Sexual</b>	Inappropriate sexual involvement	Touching or exploitation	
<b>Neglect</b>	Failure to meet basic needs	Lack of food or care	

# Why Focus on Preschool Children?

- Limited ability to express themselves.
- Dependence on adults for basic needs.
- High levels of trust in caregivers.
- The youngest children are the most vulnerable
- About 24% of children experience victimization in their first year of life.
- The total lifetime cost of child abuse and neglect is estimated at \$ 124 Billion each year, according to CDC.

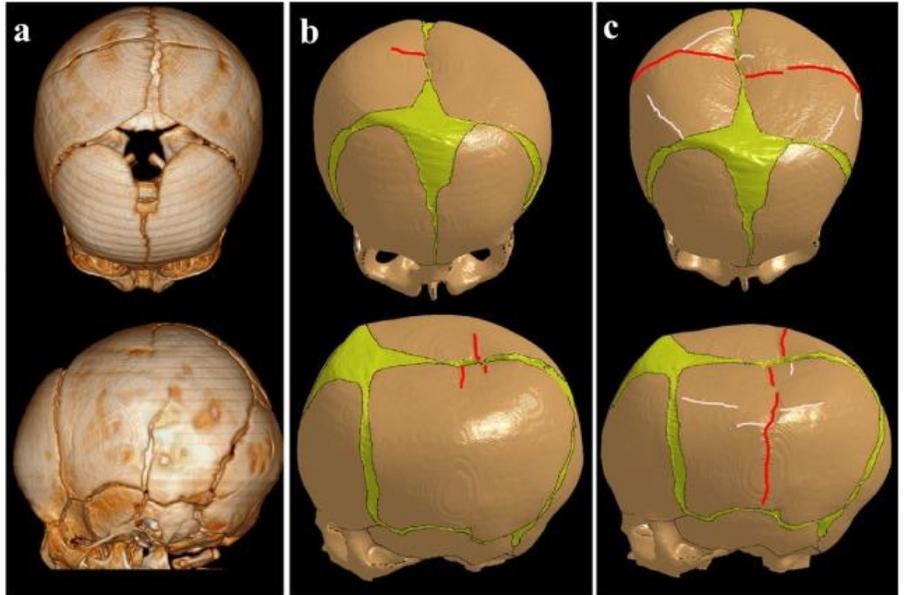
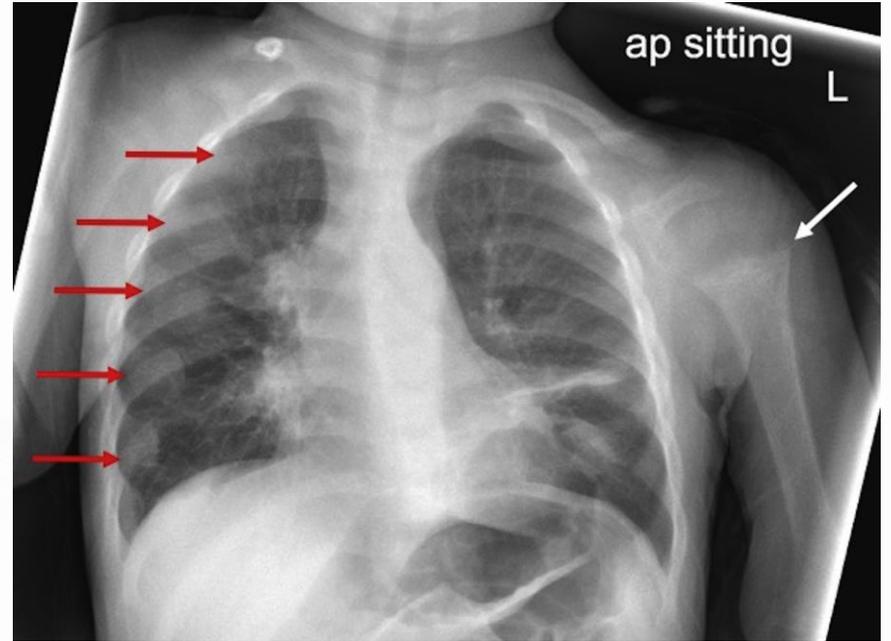


# Physical Abuse

# Unexplained Bruises, Burns, or Injuries

- Injuries that do not match the explanation given or occur frequently in unusual locations (e.g., back, thighs, or arms).
  - Bruises in the shape of an object (e.g., belt buckle or handprint).
  - Burns with clear shapes (e.g., cigarette burns, scald marks).
  - Fractures or dislocations without a reasonable explanation.





# Fearful Behavior or Flinching When Approached

- The child may react with fear when touched or when someone moves toward them suddenly.
- **Examples:**
  - Cowering, covering their face or stepping back when an adult raises their hand.
  - Reluctance to engage in physical contact with adults.



# Reluctance to Go Home

- A child showing anxiety or dread when it's time to return home.
- Examples:
  - Delaying leaving preschool or asking to stay longer.
  - Expressions like "I don't want to go home" or visible distress during pickup times.

I do not want to go home.



## Other Possible Signs:

- Wearing long sleeves or pants in hot weather to cover injuries.
- Frequent injuries at different stages of healing, suggesting ongoing abuse.





## Can you find the Red Flags in this Child

- Injury to a child who isn't crawling yet
- Visible and severe injuries.
- Injuries at different stages of healing on different surfaces of the body that are unexplained or explained in a way that doesn't make sense.
- Distinctive shapes of bruising and injuries.
- Frequency, timing, and history of injuries (frequent, after weekends, vacations, school absences).



# Emotional Abuse

# Delayed Emotional Development:

- A child may struggle to express emotions, understand social cues, or regulate their feelings.
- **Examples:**
  - Struggles with age-appropriate tasks like sharing or playing cooperatively.
  - Lack of emotional response in situations that typically elicit joy, sadness, or fear.
  - Appears overly mature or "parentified," taking on adult-like responsibilities.



## Low Self-Esteem or Extreme Anxiety:

- Emotional abuse often manifests as feelings of worthlessness, fear of making mistakes, or constant worry.
- **Examples:**
  - Frequently saying things like "I'm bad" or "I can't do anything right."
  - Fear of trying new activities due to potential failure or punishment.
  - Physical symptoms like stomachaches or headaches linked to anxiety.

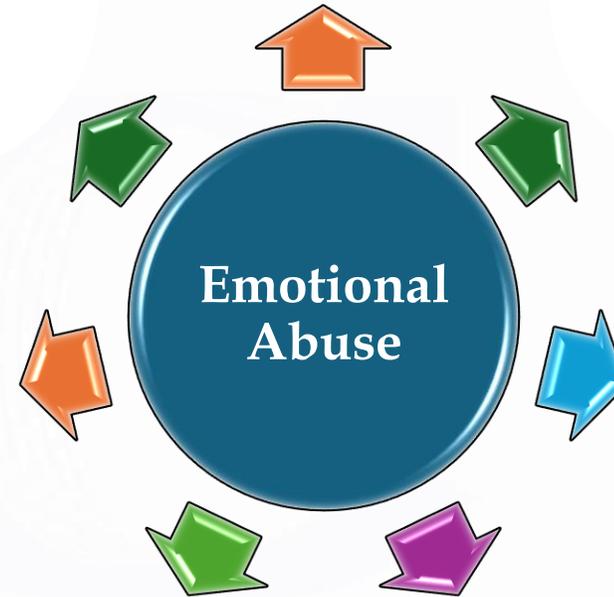


# Social Withdrawal or Aggressive Behavior:

- Emotional abuse can push a child to isolate themselves or, conversely, act out aggressively.
- **Examples:**
  - Avoiding interaction with peers or adults, sitting alone during group activities."
  - Hitting, biting, or using harsh words with others, mimicking abusive language or behaviors they've experienced.
  - Frequent tantrums or defiance in response to minor triggers.



## Long-term psychological effects:

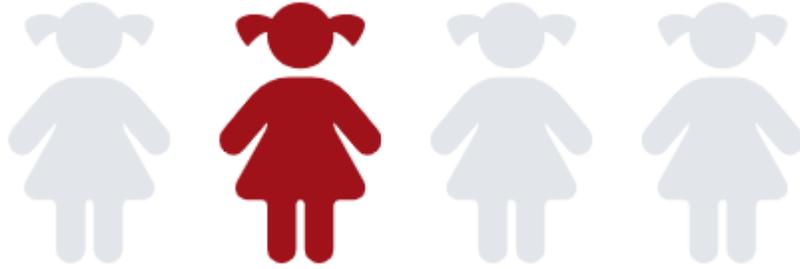


A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a pink and green dress and green tights, sits on a white carpeted floor. She has a sad expression, with her hands clasped near her mouth. In the background, three other children are sitting at a white table, engaged in an activity. The setting appears to be a classroom or playroom with shelves and toys visible.

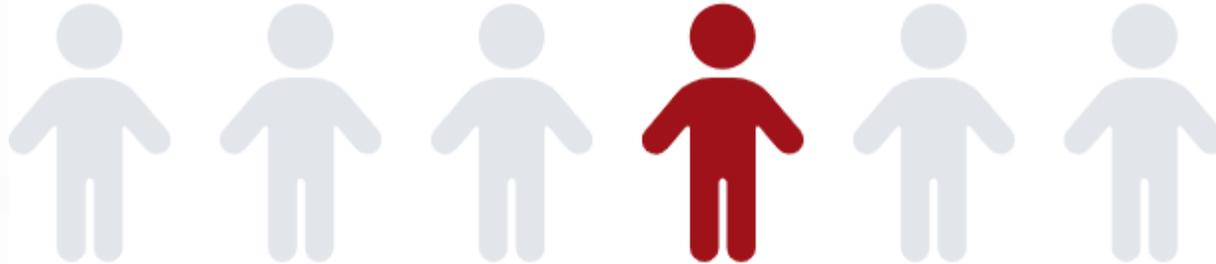
## Real Scenario:

- *“A 4-year-old child becomes tearful whenever asked to participate in group play and insists they are ‘not good enough.’*
- *What could this behavior indicate?”*

# Sexual Abuse



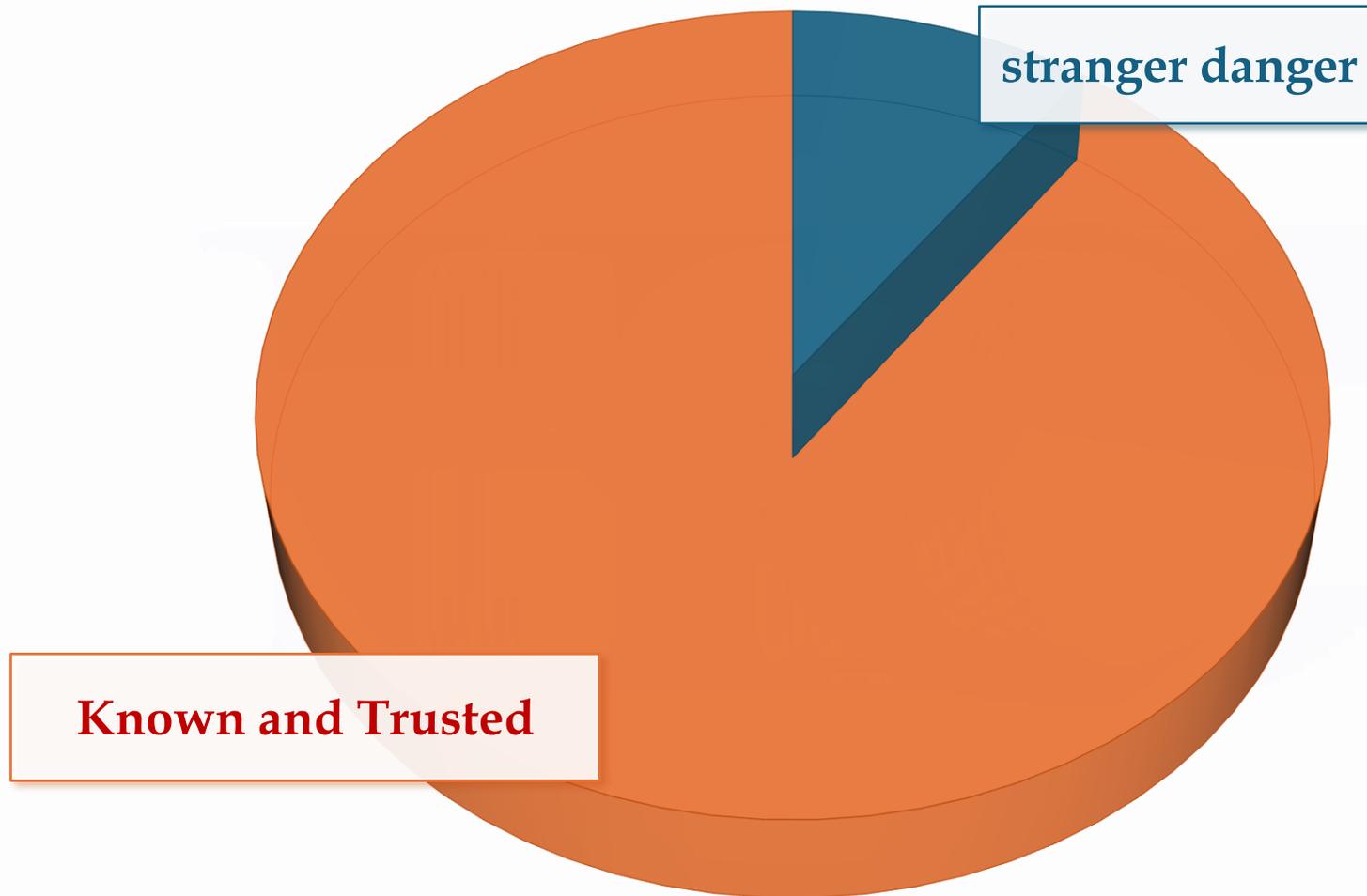
**1 out of 4 girls  
and**



**1 out of 6 boys**

**Will be sexually abused before the age of 18**

## The Myth of Stranger Danger



90% of children are abused by someone they know and trust-  
NOT A STRANGER

# Key Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse in Preschool Children

- **Behavioral Indicators:**
  - Knowledge of sexual acts inappropriate for their age.
  - Use of sexually explicit language or behaviors during play.
  - Avoidance or fear of specific people or places without explanation.
  - Sudden withdrawal, fearfulness, or excessive clinginess.



## Key Warning Signs in Preschool Children

- **Physical Indicators:**
  - Difficulty walking or sitting.
  - Pain, redness, or swelling in the genital area.
  - Frequent urinary tract infections or unexplained bleeding.



# Key Warning Signs in Preschool Children

- Emotional Indicators:
  - Sudden changes in mood, such as intense anger, sadness, or fear.
  - Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed.
  - Regression to earlier behaviors, such as bedwetting or thumb-sucking.



- Sexual abusers will seek access to children where protective barriers are low

- Protective barriers in child-serving organizations tend to be critically low, creating a target for predators

- Ongoing failure to address this issue results in increased risk to children in programs

- There is NO visual profile for molesters

- Most molesters appear helpful, trustworthy, and responsible

- Abusers come from all segments of society, and many are married, educated, and have families.

- Less than 10% of sexual abusers will EVER encounter the criminal justice system

- 90% of victims are abused by someone they know and trust



# Root Causes of Neglect:

- Parental substance abuse or mental health issues.
- Extreme poverty or lack of access to resources.
- Lack of knowledge or skills in parenting.



# Impact of Neglect:

1

## **Physical:**

Chronic illnesses, poor immune function, and developmental delays.

2

## **Emotional:**

Low self-esteem, difficulty forming attachments, and long-term trust issues.

3

## **Educational:**

Falling behind in academic readiness due to lack of stimulation or absenteeism.

# Child Neglect

# Key Signs of Neglect in Preschool Children

- **Physical Indicators:**
  - **Poor Hygiene:**
    - A child who consistently appears dirty, with unwashed hair, untrimmed nails, or a foul odor.
    - Persistent diaper rash or untreated lice infestations.
  - **Inappropriate Clothing for Weather:**
    - Wearing summer clothes in freezing temperatures or overly tight, dirty, or torn clothing.
    - Lack of weather-appropriate items such as coats, hats, or shoes in winter.



# Key Signs of Neglect in Preschool Children

- **Nutritional Indicators**
  - **Consistently Hungry:**
    - Regularly asking for or taking extra food from others.
    - Eating quickly or hoarding food as if unsure of the next meal.
  - **Signs of Malnutrition:**
    - Noticeable weight loss, pale complexion, or fatigue.
    - Frequent complaints of being hungry or visible stunted growth compared to peers.



# Key Signs of Neglect in Preschool Children

- **Behavioral Indicators:**
  - **Frequent Absenteeism:**
    - Regularly missing preschool without valid reasons or explanation.
    - Signs of being left home alone or unsupervised.
  - **Lack of Supervision:**
    - Coming to school with injuries due to unsafe conditions at home.
    - Sharing that they were alone or caring for younger siblings for extended periods.



# Key Signs of Neglect in Preschool Children

Aspect	Neglected Child	Cared-for Child
<b>Physical Appearance</b>	Dirty, ill-fitting clothes, unkempt hair.	Clean, well-fitted clothes, neatly groomed hair.
<b>Facial Expression</b>	Sad, withdrawn, or vacant.	Happy, engaged, and smiling.
<b>Behavior</b>	Isolated, plays alone, lacks interest in activities.	Social, actively engages in play, and participates in group activities.
<b>Environment</b>	Dull, cluttered, lacking stimulation.	Bright, tidy, stimulating environment with age-appropriate toys.
<b>Development</b>	Signs of developmental delay (e.g., speech delay, poor motor skills).	Age-appropriate development in physical, cognitive, and social skills.
<b>Emotional State</b>	Fearful, anxious, or overly clingy.	Confident, emotionally stable, and independent.
<b>Health</b>	Possible malnourishment, untreated illnesses, or poor hygiene.	Healthy, well-nourished, and visibly cared for.



- **Developmental Delays:**
  - Falling behind in physical, emotional, or cognitive milestones due to neglect of basic needs.

# How Teachers Can Help?

## Key Responsibilities for Teachers:

- **Observing Changes in Behavior or Physical Condition:**
  - Be vigilant for patterns such as frequent bruises, sudden fearfulness, or a decline in academic performance.
  - Note any unexplained changes in mood or social interactions, such as withdrawal or aggression.



# Key Responsibilities for Teachers:

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- **Building Trust with Children to Encourage Disclosure:**
  - Foster an open and safe classroom environment where children feel comfortable sharing.
  - Use empathetic listening and avoid judgmental or leading questions.
  - Reinforce the message that “speaking to a trusted adult is safe.”



## Key Responsibilities for Teachers:

- **Documenting Concerns with Dates and Details:**
  - Record observations meticulously, including dates, times, and descriptions of specific incidents or changes.
  - Avoid making assumptions or diagnoses – focus on factual evidence.
  - Use school or agency protocols to report concerns promptly and responsibly.



# How can teachers Recognize Child Abuse or Neglect?

## Plan.

Plan an assignment that asks students to write out what they did the day before.

What activities did they pursue?

How did they spend their time?

Notice the details.

## Ask Questions.

Questions such as “What did you have for breakfast today?”

Or “How did you sleep last night?”

These questions can provide clues to a child’s wellness.

## Observe.

for any sign of abuse or Neglect

Trunk

Ears

Neck

4 years or younger

Frenulum

Auricular area

Cheek

Eyes

Sclera

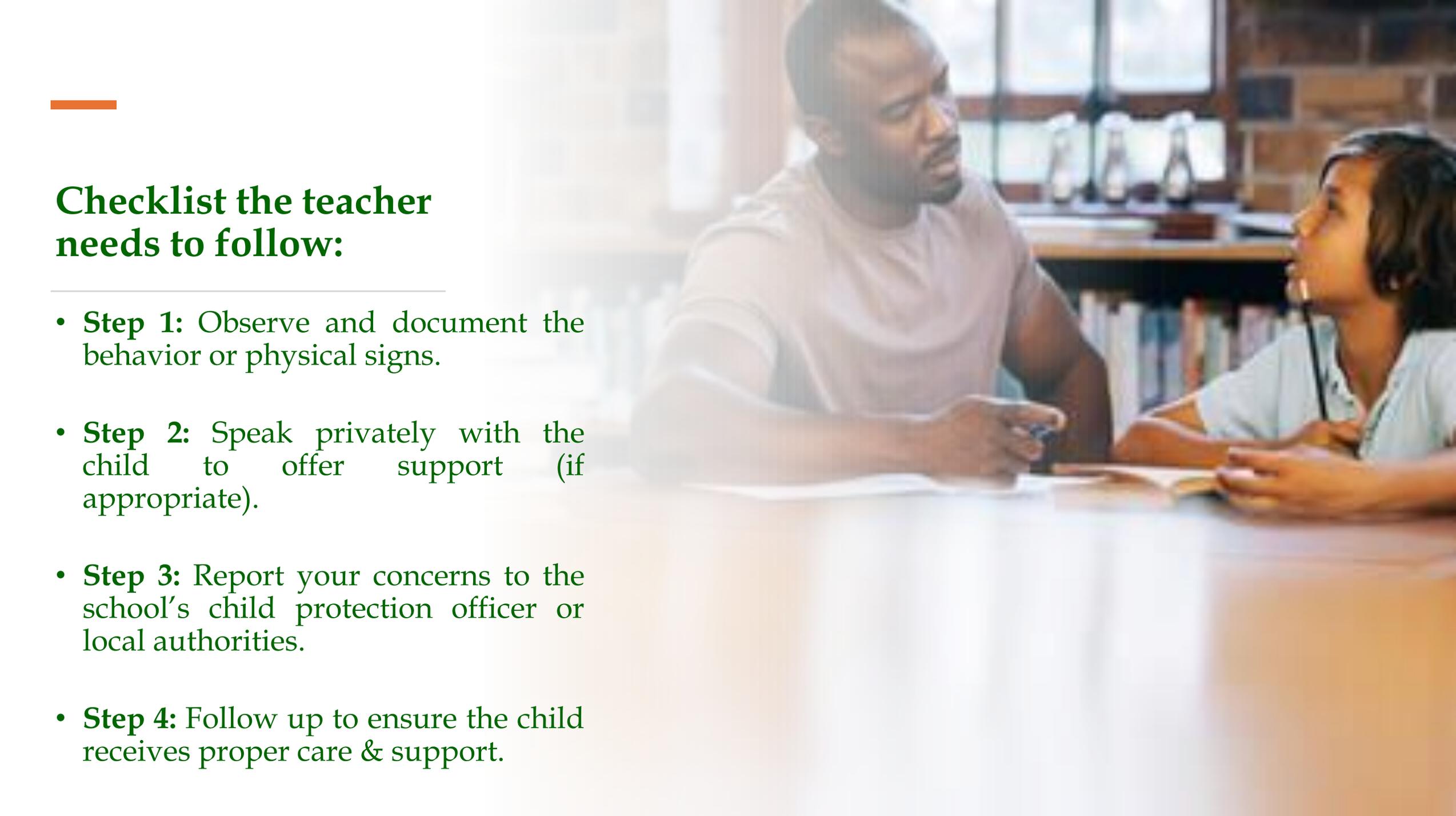
Patterned bruising



4 Any bruising on a child less than 4 months



“Kids that don’t cruise rarely bruise.”



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## Checklist the teacher needs to follow:

- **Step 1:** Observe and document the behavior or physical signs.
- **Step 2:** Speak privately with the child to offer support (if appropriate).
- **Step 3:** Report your concerns to the school's child protection officer or local authorities.
- **Step 4:** Follow up to ensure the child receives proper care & support.

# Building a Supportive Environment:

- Create a culture of openness by promoting empathy, kindness, and inclusion.
- Incorporate age-appropriate lessons on body safety and boundaries in your curriculum.
- Encourage teamwork among educators, caregivers, and counselors to address concerns collaboratively.



## Scenario

- *“A child in your class begins avoiding eye contact, appears anxious, and frequently comes to school with unwashed clothes.”*

*What would you do?*





# Parents as Protectors

## Key Actions for Parents:

- **Open Communication with Children About Their Day:**
  - Encourage daily conversations: Ask open-ended questions such as, *"What was the best part of your day?"* or *"Did anything happen today that made you feel upset or uncomfortable?"*
  - Create a safe space for your child to share their feelings without fear of judgment or punishment.
  - Teach children about personal boundaries and empower them to say "no" to inappropriate behavior.



*"I'm here to listen. You can tell me anything."*

# Key Actions for Parents

- **Monitoring for Signs of Distress After Preschool:**
  - Watch for unexplained physical signs like bruises, scratches, or torn clothing.
  - Note emotional changes such as fearfulness, sudden clinginess, or reluctance to attend
  - Be alert to behavioral shifts, such as trouble sleeping, appetite changes, or regressive behavior like bedwetting.



# Key Actions for Parents

- **Building Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers:**
  - Regularly communicate with teachers and caregivers about your child's behavior, well-being, & development.
  - Participate in school events, parent-teacher meetings, and volunteer opportunities to stay engaged.
  - Ensure caregivers and teachers are properly trained and understand child protection protocols.



# Practical Tips for Parents

Do & not to Do



- Maintain a routine of checking in with your child every day.
- Observe interactions between your child and their caregivers during drop-off and pick-up times.
- Trust your instincts – if something feels off, investigate further.

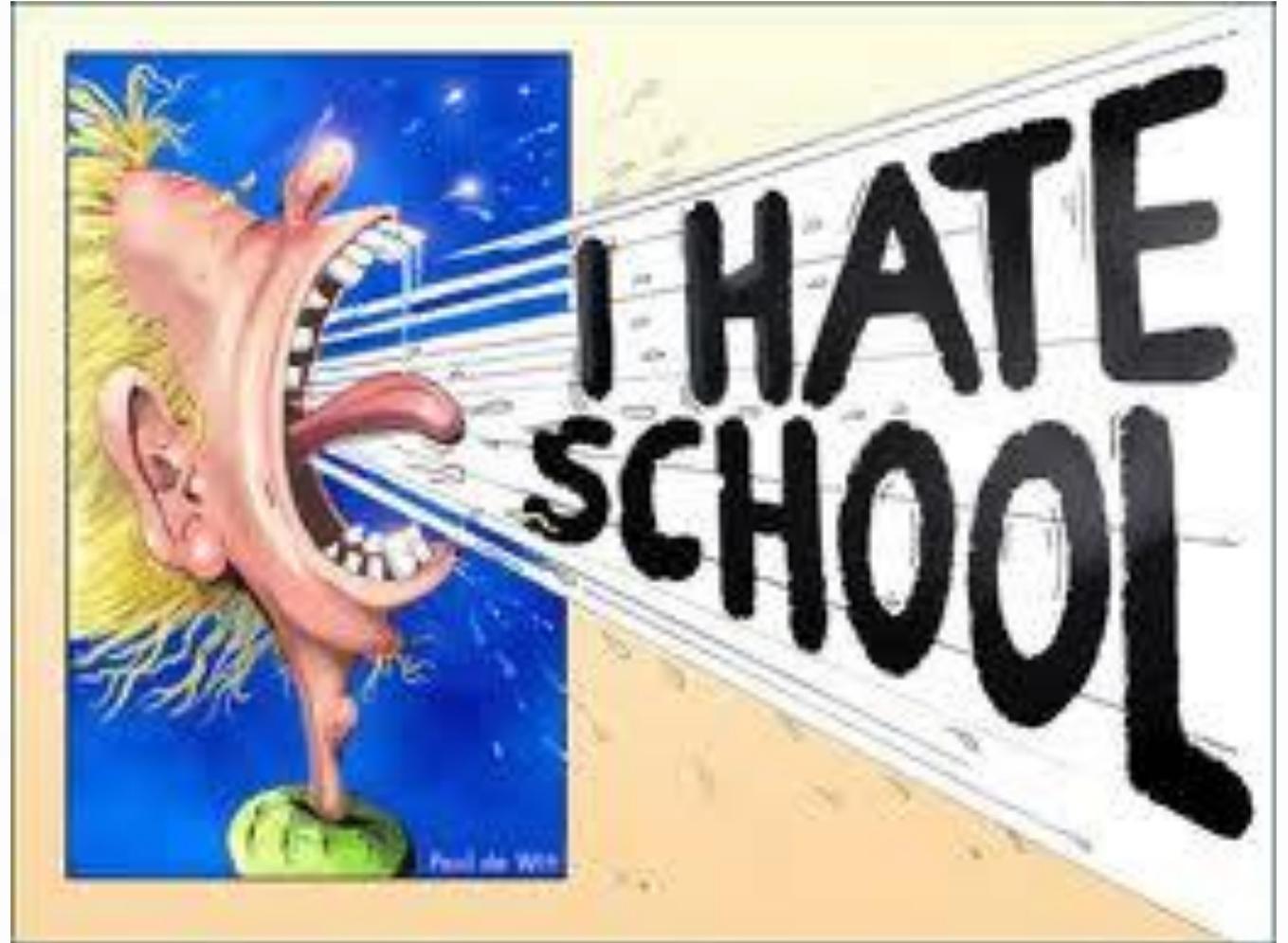


- Dismiss your child's feelings or concerns as trivial.
- Assume that abuse only happens in extreme cases – early detection is key.

## Scenario

- *“Imagine your child suddenly starts crying when it's time to go to preschool, something they used to enjoy.”*

*What steps would you take as a parent to address this situation?*



# Steps to Take When Abuse is Suspected

# What to Do if You Suspect Abuse?

- Report to relevant authorities or child protective services.
- Avoid confronting the suspected abuser directly.
- Support the child with reassurance and professional help.

# Building Safe Environments

## Creating a Safe Space in Preschool

- Establishing strict child protection policies.
- Training staff to recognize and respond to abuse.
- Encouraging involvement in parental school activities.



## Scenario:

# The Child with Sudden Behavior Changes

- Fatima, a typically outgoing 5-year-old, has started having frequent tantrums and refuses to sit near a specific male caregiver at the daycare.
- She has become anxious about bathroom visits and avoids physical contact, such as hugs or holding hands.

**What possible concerns arise from Sophia's behavior?**

**What steps should the preschool staff take to ensure her safety?**

# Scenario:

## Correct Course of Action:

- **Document Concerns:**

Record Sophia's behavior changes and specific incidents involving the male caregiver.

- **Separate and Investigate:**

Ensure Sophia is not left alone with the caregiver in question. Inform the daycare administration immediately.

- **Report and Follow-Up:**

Notify child protection authorities and cooperate fully with their investigation.

## مركز حماية الطفل: حتي عمر 18 عاما الخط الساخن 998 قانون الطفل رقم 37 لعام 2012

عقوبة تعرض الطفل للإيذاء هي الحبس والغرامة حسب عمر الطفل ودرجة  
الإيذاء

العقوبة	عمر الطفل
السجن بما لا يقل عن سنة و غرامة لا تقل عن 300 دينار أو بإحدى العقوبتين حسب نوع الإيذاء	اقل من سبعة أعوام
السجن بما لا يقل عن ستة أشهر و غرامة لا تقل عن 200 دينار أو بإحدى العقوبتين حسب نوع الإيذاء	اقل من خمس عشرة عاما
السجن و غرامة لا تقل عن 100 دينار أو بإحدى العقوبتين حسب نوع الإيذاء	من 15-18 عاما
تطبق عقوبة الضرب الذي أفضي إلى الموت أو الي العاهة المستديمة حسب الحالة.	عاهة مستديمة أو وفاة دون قصد

# Conclusion

**HC** HONOUR CODE  
HONOUR CODE FOR PIONEERING EDUCATIONAL TRAINING  
أونر كود لريادة التدريب التعليمي



# Call to Action





- Speak up if you suspect abuse — your actions can make a difference.



- Collaborate to create a protective network for children.

- Leverage available resources and helplines to ensure safety and support.



**998**



**"Together, we can ensure every child grows up in a safe and nurturing environment."**

спасибо

Teşekkür

Gracias

Ederim

Grazie

آپ کا شکریہ

Merci

تودشکرا لکم

Thank you

Danke

謝謝

Salamat

متشکرم