

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN CHILDREN

SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE INCLUDE:

- Physical signs of injury to private areas (redness, swelling, etc.).
- Child is talking about sexual things beyond a child's developmental knowledge.
- Mood disturbances (crying, agitated or hyper-behavior, anger outburst).
- Personality changes.
- Sudden fear or resistance toward going places or being with familiar people
- Sleep disruptions (nightmares, resistance to going to bed or going to sleep, waking up fearful or crying).
- Increased oppositional behavior beyond normal developmental limit testing.
- Repetitive trauma play (continuing to play the same scenes with intense emotion).
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Grades and school performance dropping.
- Regressive behaviors (return of sucking thumb, wetting pants or bed, clingy behavior, wanting to be held more, whining).
- Sexualized behaviors, such as frequent masturbation which may seem to be driven or compulsive, even to the point of genitals becoming red, sexualized play with toys such as putting doll's private parts together, trying to engage other children in sexualized play or touching.
- Disclosures from the child about incidents of sexual touch or sexual games.
- Self-harm behaviors.
- Depression .

NOTE: These symptoms are merely red flags; they are not conclusive regarding sexual abuse. However, if your child displays several symptoms, contact a trained profession who specialized in working with children to help address these emotion concerns.

SEXUAL ABUSE is defined as any forced, coerced or manipulated sexual contact or penetration by anyone in authority or power over a child. SEXUAL ABUSE can also include exposure to sexually explicit pictures, magazines or movies.

TO LEARN MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT **SARA E. WERNER, LPC, RPT-S CLINICAL THERAPIST AT BACHMANN AND ASSOCIATES.**

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