

## Facts About Child Abuse and Neglect

### What is child abuse or neglect?

Under Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 whose parent, or any other person responsible for the care of the child, does any or all of the following:

- ❖ causes, or threatens to cause, a physical or mental injury except for an accident.
- ❖ fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or caring support.
- ❖ abandons the child.
- ❖ fails to provide the kind of supervision necessary for a child's age or level of development.
- ❖ commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act involving the child – including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution – or allows the child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

Child abuse is not usually just one physical attack or just one instance of failure to meet a child's most basic needs. Usually child abuse is a pattern of behavior which takes place over a period of time. The longer child abuse continues, the more serious it becomes, and the more difficult it is to stop.

### How many children are we talking about?

In fiscal year 2001, 8,993 of Virginia's children were involved in founded cases of child abuse and/or neglect. Every 58 minutes a Virginia child is abused or neglected.

In fiscal year 2001, thirty-one children died from injuries attributable to child abuse and neglect. Twenty-one of the children who died (68%) were age 2 or under. Twenty-eight children (90%) were age 4 or under. Every 12 days a Virginia child dies from abuse or neglect.

### Who are the abusers?

Abusive parents can be your friends, your neighbors or your relatives. Child maltreatment affects all economic, racial, social, ethnic and religious groups.

### How can child abuse and neglect be prevented?

A child may be helpless, but you are not. Here are the five "R's" of preventing child abuse and neglect:

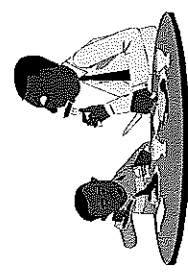
- ❖ **Remember** the risk factors. Family stress can lead to abuse or neglect.
- ❖ **Recognize** the warning signs. Children's behavior may signal that something is wrong.
- ❖ **Report** suspected abuse or neglect. Call the local department of social services or the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline -- 1-800-552-7096.
- ❖ **Raise** the issue. Educate yourself and others about child abuse and neglect.
- ❖ **Reach out.** Anything you do to support families can help to reduce stress.

For help or advice about preventing child abuse and neglect, call

**Prevent Child Abuse Virginia**  
**1-800-CHILDREN**

## How Well Do You Know Your Child/Parent?

### Hey Parents! How well do you know your child?



- ✓ Who is his or her best friend?
- ✓ Favorite food?
- ✓ Favorite TV show?
- ✓ Favorite sport to watch? To play?
- ✓ What would be a perfect day?
- ✓ Which movie or TV star would he or she like to be?
- ✓ If someone gave him or her \$10,000 how would he/she spend it?
- ✓ What does your child think the ideal parent should be like?
- ✓ What do parents do that bugs your child the most?
- ✓ What are his or her dreams for the future?

### Hey Kids! How well do you know your parent? Take this quiz to find out.



- ✓ Who is his or her best friend?
- ✓ Favorite food?
- ✓ Favorite TV show?
- ✓ Favorite sport to watch? To play?
- ✓ What is his or her favorite thing to do on a weekend?
- ✓ What was his or her favorite subject in school?
- ✓ If someone gave him or her \$10,000, how would it be spent?
- ✓ His or her perfect vacation?
- ✓ What are your parent's dreams for you when you grow up?

This April, wear a blue ribbon to reward yourself for being a blue ribbon family. For more information, call

**Prevent Child Abuse Virginia ■ 1-800-CHILDREN**

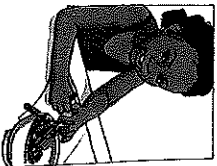
## You Can Help Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

A child may be helpless, but you are not. Here are the five "R's" of preventing child abuse and neglect:

### Remember the Risk Factors

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- Seem to be having economic, housing or personal problems.
- Are isolated from their families or communities.
- Have difficulty controlling anger or stress.
- Are dealing with physical or mental health issues.
- Had a painful childhood. Adults who were mistreated as children may unintentionally continue the pattern of abuse with their own children. They have no models of successful family relationships from which to learn.
- Abuse alcohol or drugs.
- Are inexperienced with children or have unrealistic expectations of what a child can do.



### Recognize the warning signs:

The behavior of children may signal abuse or neglect long before any change in physical appearance. Some of the signs may include:

- Nervousness around adults.
- Aggression toward adults or other children.
- Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods.
- Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities.
- Knowledge about sex that is unusual for the child's age or stage of development.
- Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Poor hygiene or dress that is inappropriate for the weather.

### Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect:

Call the department of social services in the community where the child lives or where the abuse occurred. Ask for child protective services. If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police. Virginia maintains a 24-hour hotline for questions about reporting child abuse and neglect:

**Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline**  
1-800-552-7096 (voice/TTY)

**More →**

### Raise the Issue:

By educating yourself and others you can help your community prevent child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place.

- Call 1-800-CHILDREN for information that you can photocopy and post in your workplace, apartment building, library, laundromat, place of worship, school, beauty parlor or supermarket.
- Contact your school district, library or faith group about support programs for parents and how you can help. If none exist, encourage them to sponsor or develop resources for parents.
- Call or write your elected officials and ask them to advocate for parent support and child abuse prevention programs. Check our website, [www.preventchildabuseva.org/advocacy.htm](http://www.preventchildabuseva.org/advocacy.htm), to find your legislator or send a message.



### Reach Out:

Anything you do to support kids and parents can help reduce the stress that often leads to abuse and neglect.

- Be a friend to a parent or a child you know. Show them you care.
- Talk to your neighbors about looking out for one another's children. Show that you are involved.
- Help relieve the financial stress of parenting by donating or lending used clothing, furniture or toys.
- Volunteer your time and money for programs in your community that support children and families.



**Prevent Child Abuse**  
Virginia

**1-800-CHILDREN**

This April, wear a blue ribbon to show you care about the welfare of children and families. For information or advice about how you can prevent child abuse and neglect, call:

