

Child Abuse

Unit Six- Contemporary America/
English 11/11 Honors

The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

Defines child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum, “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in **death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation**, or an act or failure to act which presents an **imminent risk of serious harm.**”

Each state provides its own definitions of child abuse and neglect, using the CAPTA as a guideline. Most states recognize the **four major types of maltreatment** as

- 1. Physical Abuse**
- 2. Neglect**
- 3. Sexual Abuse**
- 4. Emotional Abuse**

Additionally, many states identify **abandonment, parental substance use, and human trafficking** as abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse

- A **non accidental** physical injury to a child caused by a parent, caregiver, or other person responsible for a child.
- Can include punching, beating, kicking biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Injuries can range from **minor bruises** to **severe fractures** or **death**.

Neglect

The failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for a child's **basic needs**.

Includes the following categories:

- **Physical-** failure to provide **necessary food or shelter**, lack of **appropriate supervision**
- **Medical-** failure to provide **necessary medical or mental health treatment**, withholding **medically indicated treatment from children with life-threatening conditions**
- **Educational-** Failure to **educate a child** or attend to **special education needs**
- **Emotional-** Inattention to a child's **emotional needs**, failure to **provide psychological care**, permitting a child to use **alcohol or other drugs**.

Neglect (continued)

*It is important to note here that **living in poverty** is NOT considered child abuse or neglect. It is the **failure to use available information and resources** to care for their child, which puts his or her health and safety at risk. Child welfare intervention could be required.

Sexual Abuse

Defined by CAPTA as the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purposes of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

Emotional Abuse

- A **pattern** of behavior that impairs a child's **emotional development** or **sense of self-worth**.
- This may include constant **criticism, threats, or rejection** as well as **withholding love, support, or guidance**.
- Emotional abuse is **often difficult to prove**, and therefore, child protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or mental injury to the child.

Abandonment

A child is considered when **the parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown**, the child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers **serious harm**, the child has been **deserted with no regard for his or her health or safety**, or the parent has **failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support** for a specified period of time.

*Safe haven laws—that provide safe places for parents to relinquish newborn infants with punishment—have been enacted in many states.

Parental Substance Abuse

Circumstances that are considered abuse or neglect in some states include the following:

- Exposing a child to harm **prenatally** due to the mother's use of legal or illegal drugs or other substances
- Manufacturing **methamphetamine** in the presence of a child
- **Selling, distributing, or giving illegal drugs or alcohol** to a child
- Using a **controlled substance** that **impairs** the caregiver's ability to adequately care for the child

Human Trafficking

- Considered a form of **modern-day slavery**.
- Includes both **sex** and **labor trafficking**.
- Sex trafficking is recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining someone for a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, pornography, or stripping.
- Labor trafficking is forced labor, including drug dealing, begging, or working long hours for little pay.

The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Well-Being

Child abuse can have lifelong implications for victims, including on their wellbeing. While the physical wounds may heal, there are many long-term consequences of experiencing the trauma of abuse or neglect. A child or youth's ability to cope and thrive after trauma is called **resilience**. With help, many of these children can work through and overcome their past experiences. Children who are maltreated may be at risk of experiencing **cognitive delays and emotional difficulties**, among other issues, which can affect many aspects of their lives, including their academic outcomes and social skills development. Experiencing childhood maltreatment is also a risk factor for **depression, anxiety, and other psychiatric disorders**.