

Child Abuse



Child abuse occurs when a parent, caregiver, or other caregiver intentionally acts and places the child at risk or causes physical, sexual, mental, and/or emotional harm. In Puerto Rico, **Act No. 57 of 2023, Law for the Prevention of Abuse, Preservation of Family Unity and for the Safety, Welfare and Protection of Minors**, establishes the legal responsibilities for their protection.

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

Neglect: Occurs when parents or caregivers fail to ensure essential needs such as food, supervision, access to health services, education, clothing, and safe housing for children. It also includes not guaranteeing the basic services essential for a healthy environment, according to their possibilities.

Physical abuse: Any non-accidental blow or injury in one or more incidents. This includes pushing, pulling hair, kicking, scratching, suffocating, biting, burning, shaking strongly, among others, acts that cause harm through physical force or objects.

Emotional abuse: It consists of not providing an adequate environment for the emotional well-being and healthy development of the child. It includes lack of affection or protection, isolation, rejection and ignorance of the child, as well as verbal attacks, humiliation, threats or constant devaluation. It also includes exposing the child to dangerous situations, such as violence, drunkenness, use of controlled substances, or engaging in criminal activities.

Sexual abuse: Any sexual conduct carried out with a minor or in his presence to satisfy the aggressor. It includes inappropriate touching, exposure to sexual acts, penetration, oral sex, photographs for sexual purposes, prostitution, sex trafficking or other forms of exploitation.

Child exploitation: It is the act of recruiting, hiding, transporting or capturing minors to force them to work or sexually exploit them. Labor exploitation can include activities such as the distribution and sale of drugs, participation in armed violence, domestic work, among others. Sexual exploitation includes prostitution, pornography, arranged marriages and exploitation for reproductive purposes, among other modalities.

Institutional abuse: Occurs when an official of a public or private institution in charge of the care, education, treatment or detention of a minor causes harm or exposes him or her to the risk of suffering physical, mental and/or emotional harm. It can happen in schools, day care centers, shelters or similar institutions.

Interesting facts:

- Usually, the person who commits abuse is someone close to him to the least, as one or both parents, a family member, friend or acquaintance.
- Cases of sexual abuse can Occur in a alone incident or develop through A series of events in which the person aggressor wina the trust of the Minor by means of Handling, andFools or Threats, in order to Avoid that reveal who is being abused.
- It is common that a(a) minor is being victimized by different Types of abuse at the same time.

Red flags:



A child victim of abuse may experience confusion, shame, or guilt, making it difficult for them to talk about what happened. It's important to be on the lookout for red flags, as these can vary depending on the type of abuse you're experiencing.

- Bumps, bruises, fractures, or burns.
- Pain, bleeding, genital or anal lesions is.
- Changes in behavior, such as rebelliousness, aggressiveness, anger, hostility, or hyperactivity.
- Age-inappropriate sexual behavior.
- Poor hygiene.
- Health complications with no clear explanation
- Frequent absences from school or changes in academic performance.
- Isolation from friends or abandonment of activities that they usually did.
- Avoid specific situations, such as refusing to use the school bus or attending school.
- Unusual fears or sudden loss of self-confidence.
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares, sadness, or anxiety.
- Evidence of lack of supervision by their parents or caregivers.
- Self-harm or suicide attempts.
- Pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

Consequences of abuse:

Abuse in any of its forms leave a deep mark on the lives of those who suffer it. Its effects can last for years and impact the physical, emotional and mental well-being of the child; In extreme cases, it can even result in death.

Recovery will depend on the type of abuse suffered, the age of the child at the time of the events, the duration of the situation, the link with the aggressor, the psychosocial factors present and access to support and projection services.

Under **Law 57**, anyone who suspects abuse must report it to the following telephone lines:

Department of the Family:

Abuse Hotlines

787-749-1333/1-800-981-8333

Guidance Services Line

787-977-8022

(Free of charge, 24 hours 7 days a week)

Research Department of

Homeland Security

1-866-347-2423

Social and Emotional Aspect

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after your treatment, please visit your primary care physician or call the following phone lines:

Medical Advice Line

1-844-347-7801

TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804

APS Health

787-641-9133

References:

<https://bvirtualogp.pr.gov/ogp/Bvirtual/leyesreferencia/PDF/57-2023.pdf>

<https://adfan.pr.gov/AdministracionesAuxiliares/ProteccionSocial/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://poderjudicial.pr/educacion-a-la-comunidad/informacion-sobres-temas-legales/problemas-sociales-comunes/maltrato-de-menores/>

<https://estadisticas.pr/en/perfil-maltrato-menores>

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