

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or **Child Protective Services (CPS) at 800-252-5400**.

Possible physical warning signs of sexual abuse could be:

- Difficulty sitting or walking,
- Pain in the genital areas and,
- Claims of stomachaches and headaches.

Possible behavioral indicators may include:

- Verbal references or pretend games of sexual activity between adults and children
- Fear of being alone with adults of a particular gender
- Sexually suggestive behavior

Possible emotional warning signs to be aware of include:

- Withdrawal
- Depression
- Sleeping and eating disorders
- Problems in school

A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.

As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the campus counselor or principal will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) also manage early intervention counseling programs.

The following websites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse.

<http://www.sapn.nonprofitoffice.com>

<http://www.taasa.org>

http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/childabuse1.shtml