

- Take measures to assist the child including counselling, mediation, prevention and early intervention services, family reconstruction or rehabilitation, behaviour modification, problem solving or referral to another suitable qualified person or organization.
- If removing the child is not in his/her best interest, notify the police so that they can take action against the offender.

### What can educators do?

- Believe children who disclose abuse.
- Disclosing abuse can be very difficult for children. They need to be listened to and believed.
- Document cases: keep simple, carefully dated notes about changes in children's behaviour.
- Reassure the child that telling about the abuse was important.
- Should not make promises that you are unable to keep.
- Reassure the child that the abuse is not his/her fault.
- Operate as advocates for the rights of young children, who are often denied a voice.
- Support older learners who are pregnant as a result of abuse. Encourage them to continue their schooling and realize their right to education.
- Intervene and appropriately deal with abusive behaviour in which children engage in.
- Report colleagues who abuse learners

### What can schools do?

- establish strong links with the police, clinics and hospitals, social workers and other relevant government or NGO role players who can help the school report, investigate and prosecute cases, support and counsel abused learners and raise awareness amongst educators and learners.
- school management needs to act promptly when an abused learner has to face the learner-perpetrator or teacher-perpetrator at school every day.
- Ensure internal disciplinary processes function properly.



- In cases that call for expulsion of a learner or dismissal of an educator, there must be prompt and decisive communication with the provincial head of department, and with the South African Council of Educators.
- Each school should have a team of designated educators to deal with cases of sexual abuse and harassment.
- An effective School Safety Team or School-based Support Team can help report cases and build excellent support networks and corrective mechanisms.
- A committed Life Orientation educator can ensure that she/he has a good knowledge of reporting procedures, some counselling skills, effective ideas for education and classroom management, and a good network of contacts for support locally.

This information was made possible by:

Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre to end violence against women. They can be contacted @ 011 403 4267

For more information contact the Department of Basic Education:

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# Educators Speak Out Against Child Abuse!



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**



A person who has knowledge that any form of abuse has been committed against a child must report such knowledge immediately to a police official. Failure to do so constitutes a fine, imprisonment or both but not exceeding five years. Educators are compelled to report any abuse experienced by children. This is more emphasized by their *loco parentis* role they have over children.

This brochure seeks to give information on child abuse, types and internal & external legal remedies in reporting such.

**Child Abuse** is any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child. These include but not limited to:

- Assaulting a child or inflict any other form of deliberate injury to a child;
- Sexually abusing a child or allowing a child to be sexually abused;
- Bullying by another child;
- A labour practice that exploits a child; or
- Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child's psychologically or emotionally.

## Types of Abuse

**Physical Abuse** – is an injury resulting from physical aggression. Even if the injury was not intended, the act is considered physical abuse. The injury form physical abuse may be the result of:

- Beating, slapping, or hitting
- Pushing, shaking, kicking, or throwing
- pinching, biting, choking, or hair pulling
- burning with cigarettes, scalding water, or other hot objects
- severe physical punishment including corporal punishment

**Sexual Abuse** – is any sexual act between an adult and a child, including penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex. Other examples include;

- fondling – touching or kissing a child's genitals, making a child fondle an adult's genitals

- forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom
- exposing children to adult sexuality – performing sexual acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, telling 'dirty' stories, showing pornography to a child
- commercial exploitation – sexual exploitation through child prostitution or child pornography
- Incest

**Emotional / Psychological Abuse** – can be a pattern of behavior by parents or caregivers that can seriously interfere with a child's cognitive, emotional, psychological or social development. It can include:

- ignoring
- rejecting
- exploiting or corrupting
- isolating and;
- verbally assaulting a child

### Factors to note contributing to child abuse:

- Child abuse is mainly about the abuse of an adult's power, authority and responsibility.
- The power differences between adults and children make it extremely difficult for many children to say no to adults, or to avoid abusive situations.
- Girl children are particularly vulnerable in a society where males take it as their right to own and control the lives of women as well as children
- Socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment fuel anxiety, frustration and aggression in our communities.
- Survival sex"- where parents exploit their own children for their family to survive.
- Transactional sex such as "sugar daddy" relationships.

## Signs and effects of child abuse

- Depression, feelings of guilt, withdrawal, acting out, lowered self-esteem, phobias, nightmares, bedwetting.
- Refusing to go to school and refusing to be left alone with individuals.
- Cutting one's body, attempted suicide, a sense of powerlessness, and distrust of adults.
- Adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, unusual or excessive itching of the genitals or anal area, bleeding around the vagina or rectum.
- It can persist well into adulthood for some individuals
- Long-term effects can include depression, substance addiction (drugs and alcohol), problems relating sexually to partners, eating disorders, problems associated with trust, self-blame and powerlessness.
- Violence becomes normalized in young children's lives.

## Myths contributing to child abuse

- AIDS can be cured if an infected person has sex with a virgin.
- Not having sex is bad for your mental health

## Procedures for reporting child abuse

- The Children's Act lists a number of people who have an obligation to report child abuse to the police, department of social development or designated child protection organisation.
- The Act defines a "designated child protection organization" as an organisation designated in terms of section 107 to perform designated child protection services.
- Once a report has been made, the safety and well-being of the child must be ensured;
- Conduct an investigation and write an assessment report;
- Initiate proceedings if the investigation substantiates the reported child abuse or neglect.