

The issue of child abuse is recognized in April of each year. This can be a very uncomfortable topic for individuals to discuss. We have come a long way in identifying child abuse cases. However, there are still many children in our country who are in these terrible situations and their cries for help are left unheard. A little education on the subject may help to save a child's life.

According to the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, abuse is defined as an action against a child. It is an act of commission and is generally characterized in three categories:

- **Physical Abuse:** the non-accidental injury of a child.
- **Sexual Abuse:** any sexual activity upon or with a child. The act may be for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator or a third party.
- **Emotional Abuse:** chronic acts which interfere with the psychological and/or social development of a child.

Neglect is a form of abuse and it also comes in three forms including:

- **Physical neglect:** failure to meet the requirements basic to a child's physical development, such as supervision, housing, clothing, medical attention, nutrition, and support.
- **Emotional neglect:** failure to provide the support and/or affection necessary for the child's psychological and social development. For purposes of reporting, some agencies will further break the categories of neglect into more specific acts of omission, such as medical neglect or lack of proper supervision. A category such as this which is especially important to the teacher or school authority is:
- **Educational neglect:** failure to ensure a child's opportunity to learn in a school or home environment.

There are many things that adults can look out for in terms of signs of child abuse some of the most common signs to watch for are:

- Bruises, welts or marks on the child. Many times this is noticeable after a long absence, such as a vacation, weekend or illness.
- The child wearing clothing that is inappropriate for the weather, such as long sleeve shirts in hot weather.
- The child with excessive sunburn, illnesses, colds, insect bites, etc. This may indicate the child's prolonged exposure to the elements or housing conditions that are potentially unsafe for the child.
- Any change or strange behavior in a child may be a sign. Some signs may be reluctance to change clothing for gym activities, difficulty or pain while sitting or walking, excessive tiredness or hunger or if the child is consistently late for school, aggressive behavior from the child, sudden changes in academic performance or if the child is weary of contact with adults.

These are just a few signs to watch for when child abuse is suspected. Not every situation or child is the same so signs of abuse may vary. If you ever suspect child abuse, don't hesitate to call the Hocking County Public Children Service Agency at 740-385-4168.