

Children at Risk: Evidence



Which professionals can look for signs and evidence of risks to children?

Every professional who comes in contact with children and/or parents/caretakers has the opportunity to identify risks to children. This would include the obvious: child welfare, law enforcement, medical, teachers/educators, prevention and treatment professionals, and fire/ems. But it can also include the not so obvious: code enforcement, camp counselors, housing authorities, utility workers, nurse-family partnerships, and others.

None of these professionals are likely to observe all of the signs and evidence of risks to children, but each of these professionals may have the opportunity to provide a critical piece of the picture of a child that could result in an intervention.

Why is it critical that professionals understand and identify risks to children?

- To be able to report to appropriate agencies (i.e. Child Welfare, Law Enforcement)
- To allow for earlier identification, intervention, and services for drug endangered children
- To increase information and evidence for other professionals in order to help drug endangered children
- To enhance investigations and cases of all disciplines
- To enhance the capacity of each agency to better serve children
- To increase the likelihood of breaking the multigenerational cycles of abuse and neglect and substance abuse

What can professionals look for?

1. Signs of children
2. Indicators of increased risk of abuse or neglect
3. Signs of actual abuse: physical, emotional, sexual
4. Signs of actual neglect

Signs of Children:

<input type="checkbox"/> Child car seat or booster seat in car	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's drawings on refrigerator
<input type="checkbox"/> Toys in yard or driveway of residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Diapers or school papers in trash
<input type="checkbox"/> Pictures of child on cell phone/computer screen	<input type="checkbox"/> Child food items in trash (e.g. Graduate brand foods, Gerber containers, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalk chalk drawings at residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's items hanging in windows

What increases the likelihood of the risk of abuse and/or neglect?

<input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver's substance use or withdrawal	<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired or intoxicated caregiver
<input type="checkbox"/> Increased family stressors (e.g. loss of housing, employment, income; death in family; medical issues; birth of a child, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug users, dealers, drug cooks, parolees, probationers, sex offenders, or other unknown people in/around residence
<input type="checkbox"/> Harmful substances within the residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver has out of proportion anger/rage or has impulsive, erratic or aggressive behaviors
<input type="checkbox"/> Chaotic environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Previously reported abuse or neglect
<input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver has irrational thinking or other mental health issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Child has behavior problems or is difficult to manage
<input type="checkbox"/> Weapons/booby traps in residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence in the residence

Possible signs of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual):

<input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained injuries to the child	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence in the residence
<input type="checkbox"/> Cuts, welts, bruises, burns or other marks on the child (e.g. belt marks, linear marks, bruising on or behind ears, black eyes, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver swears at, insults, puts down, or talks negative to child or about child
<input type="checkbox"/> Child seems fearful of caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of abuse to pets or other animals
<input type="checkbox"/> Child has knowledge beyond their age of sexual activity or acts out sexually	<input type="checkbox"/> Unusual markings on the child that are not easily explained

For more information on Drug Endangered Children please contact National DEC:

www.nationaldec.org

Possible signs of neglect:

<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired/intoxicated caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe living environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug buys occurring with child present
<input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate or no supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Air quality issues in the residence
<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled substance in residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposed/uncovered /hazardous wiring
<input type="checkbox"/> Controlled substance or other unsafe items accessible to child (Children often find ways to reach things that adults think are out of reach)	<input type="checkbox"/> Child commits crime to support the caregiver's drug use or to support the family due to caregiver's drug use
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of basic necessities (e.g. food, clothing, shelter)	<input type="checkbox"/> Child is "parentified" – child takes on parental role (ex: 4 year old feeding or changing infant)
<input type="checkbox"/> Signs or threats of violence (e.g. holes in walls or doors, broken furniture or other items)	<input type="checkbox"/> Child witnesses or is present during caregiver's criminal behavior (e.g. theft, robbery, assault)
<input type="checkbox"/> Spoiled or moldy food	<input type="checkbox"/> Child is dirty
<input type="checkbox"/> Child does not react to presence of professionals in residence or when asked questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Residence is injurious (e.g. very cluttered, garbage overflowing, dirty dishes scattered)
<input type="checkbox"/> Child has untreated illness or injury	<input type="checkbox"/> Health risks in residence (e.g. rodents, roaches, insects, feces/urine, soiled sheets/bed, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational delays	<input type="checkbox"/> Child ingests illegal or harmful substance
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities not working	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence in the residence
<input type="checkbox"/> Chemical or cooking elements from drug lab in the residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Child imitates inappropriate and/or negative adult behavior

Things to Consider

1. What other types of **evidence** might indicate **physical** or **sexual abuse** or **neglect**?
2. What **evidence** can you look for that shows **emotional problems**?
3. What **evidence** can you look for that shows **behavioral problems**?
4. What **evidence** can you look for that shows **cognitive problems**?

Examples of Emotional Problems of the Child

<input type="checkbox"/> Attachment Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/> Acting out
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	<input type="checkbox"/> Attaching to strangers too easily
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Mistrust or fear of others
<input type="checkbox"/> Depression	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Complex emotions (e.g. guilt, shame, embarrassment)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep disorders (e.g. nightmares, restlessness, insomnia)
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficult time understanding or sharing their emotions (e.g. love, anger, guilt, sadness)	<input type="checkbox"/> Low threshold of stimulation (e.g. overwhelmed with normal light or noise levels)

Examples of Behavioral Problems of the Child

<input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive
<input type="checkbox"/> Child seriously misbehaves (e.g. belligerent, destructive, threatening, physically cruel, deceitful, disobedient, dishonest, aggressive)	<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate sexual behaviors or sexually acts out

Examples of Cognitive Problems of the Child

<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty talking and listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble learning from mistakes
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty paying attention	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble picking up social cues (e.g. unable to read others emotions)
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty remembering	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor communication skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational delays
<input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupied or tired	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor school achievement

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