

Signs of Child Abuse & Neglect

GUIDELINES FOR ANIMAL WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

If you are visiting a household where a child is present and you encounter any of the following, it could be a sign of child abuse or neglect.* If abuse is disclosed or you observe something that is cause for concern regarding the well-being of a child, report this information to law enforcement or child protective services.

Physical or Sexual Abuse

- Bruising, burns, redness, or lacerations
- Hidden or unexplained injuries
- Multiple injuries in different stages of healing
- Injuries to both sides of the body (accidental injuries are more likely to be one-sided)
- Recoiling from touch
- Sudden changes in behavior or emotional state in the presence of a particular person
- Emotional outbursts
- Abuse of animals
- Reports of bedwetting and/or nightmares
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors (including sexual abuse of animals)

Neglect

- Poor hygiene (body odor, soiled clothing, etc.)
- Untreated injuries or health concerns
- Lack of adult presence or supervision
- Signs of malnutrition (fatigue, hallowed appearance, weakness, etc.)
- Signs of dehydration (lethargy, confusion, dizziness, dry or shriveled skin, etc.)

- Unmet basic needs (lack of food, utilities, medication, etc.)
- Abuse of animals
- Inappropriate sexual behaviors (including sexual abuse of animals)

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

- Emotional outbursts
- Sudden changes in behavior or emotional state in the presence of a particular person
- Lack of emotion or empathy (including in their interactions with animals)
- Age-inappropriate behaviors (e.g., taking on the role of a parent)
- Withdrawal or isolation

Notes:

*NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of the signs of child abuse and neglect; rather, it is intended to highlight the signs animal welfare professionals might be most likely to encounter in the typical course of their work.