

Definition on Child Abuse

For the purpose of the Child Protection policy for Colegio Interamericano, we will define abuse as a form of maltreatment of a child:

- Abuse or neglect by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm
- Children may be abused in a family, or in an institutional, educational, community setting by those known to them or by others unknown to them (ex. via the internet).
- They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse:

- Inflicting physical injury on a child by other than accidental means, causing skin bruising, burns, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function death; and/or
- Creating a substantial risk of physical harm to a child's bodily functioning; and/or
- Committing acts that are cruel or inhumane regardless of observable injury. Such acts may include, but are not limited to, instances of extreme discipline demonstrating a disregard of a child's pain and/or mental suffering; and/or
- Assaulting or criminally mistreating a child as defined by either the criminal code or school policy; and/or
- Engaging in actions or omissions resulting in injury to, or creating a substantial risk to the physical or mental health or development of a child; and/or
- Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any of the above.

Possible indicators of physical abuse:

- Unexplained bruises and welts on any part of the body.
- Bruises of different ages (various colors).
- Injuries reflecting shape of article used (electric cord, belt, buckle, ping pong paddle, hand, etc.).
- Injuries that regularly appear after absence or vacation.
- Unexplained burns, especially to soles, palms, back, or buttocks.
- Burns with a pattern from an electric burner, iron, or cigarette.

- Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso.
- Injuries inconsistent with information offered by the child.
- Immersion burns with a distinct boundary line.
- Unexplained laceration, abrasions, or fractures.

Neglect:

Failure to provide for a child's basic needs within their own environment.

Forms of neglect:

- **Physical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision-this would include failure to provide proper adult guardianship such as leaving children unsupervised at home for any extended period of time.
- **Medical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment); and/or
- **Emotional** (e.g., a pattern of actions, such as: inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to abuse alcohol or other drugs, specific examples may include verbal humiliation, refusing to acknowledge presence of child, invasion of privacy for no specific reason, violent threats, etc.).

Possible indicators of neglect:

- Child is unwanted, or basic needs are not met.
- Parents are uninterested in child's academic performance.
- Parents do not respond to repeated communications from the school.
- Child does not want to go home.
- Child is left for extended periods of time (age appropriate) without parents or a guardian.
- Parents cannot be reached in the case of emergency.

Important notes:

- Behavioral indicators in and of themselves do not constitute abuse or neglect.
- Together with other indicators, such as family dynamics, they may warrant a referral.

Sexual abuse:

- Sexual abuse is committing or allowing any sexual offense to be committed against a child as defined in either the criminal code of the country or the school policy, or intentionally touching either directly or through clothing, the genitals, anus, or breasts of a child for other than hygiene or child care purposes.
- It can include kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, involving children in looking at/or in the production of: sexually inappropriate images, grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).
- Sexual abuse has some different characteristics of child abuse that warrant special attention. While physical abuse is often the result of immediate stress and not usually planned, sexual abuse requires planning with results that are more insidious. The planning, referred to as **grooming**, often results in victims accepting the blame, responsibility, guilt and shame for the sexual behavior of the offender. Sexual abuse requires far more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so it is more difficult to report.
- Many victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that sex is a form of love, so they tend to love their offender and often present as happy and well-adjusted children with no negative symptoms because of their perception of being loved.

Working with the sexual offender cannot be done by school counselors. Outside sources of professional assistance would be consulted.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse:

- Sexual knowledge, behavior, or use of language not appropriate to age level.
- Unusual interpersonal relationship patterns.
- Venereal disease in a child of any age.
- Evidence of physical trauma or bleeding to the oral, genital, or anal areas.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Refusing to change into PE clothes, fear of bathrooms.
- Child running away from home and not giving any specific complaint.
- Not wanting to be alone with an individual.
- Pregnancy, especially at a young age.
- Extremely protective parenting.

Emotional/ Psychological abuse:

- Emotional abuse is the continuous emotional mistreatment of a child. It can happen by itself, for example through the form of humiliating or degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement or isolation.
- It can include rejecting or ignoring a child, making them feel worthless or unloved, inadequate, the constant pressure on children to achieve to a far higher level than they can attain, using degrading language or behaviours, threatening them or encouraging them to develop behaviours that are self-destructive, preventing the child from interacting socially with other children or adults, experiences of bullying, including online bullying, the exploitation or corruption of children.

Possible indicators of emotional abuse:

- Severe developmental gaps
- Severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
- Severe symptoms of self destructive behaviour – self harming, suicide attempts, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse
- Overly compliant; too well-mannered; too neat and clean
- Displays attention seeking behaviours or displays extreme inhibition in play
- When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home
- Violent behavior (screaming, cursing, threatening)
- Cruel teasing, bullying
- Telling lies

Sexual exploitation:

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of a child.

Commercial Exploitation:

Any form of exploitation of children for the purpose of financial gain by an individual. Examples include:

- Exploitation through child labor and in accordance with international law;
- The sale and trafficking of children and adolescents;

- The removal of human organs or tissues, as well as their marketing;
- The contemporary forms of slavery and practices similar to debt bondage, the condition of a servant with forced labor without payment;
- The work whose nature or the circumstances is likely to harm the health,
- safety or morals of children and adolescents;
- The recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts or military activities
- The use of children and adolescents for the illicit activities such as the production and trafficking of drugs and other narcotics.

Bullying

A specific type of aggression (physical, verbal, online or social) which includes behavior that is intended to harm, disturb, intimidate, or humiliate and is characterized by an imbalance of power between individuals or groups.

Please refer to appendix D for more information on the Anti-bullying policy at Colegio Interamericano.

Other safeguarding concerns:

- Drug and alcohol use and abuse, including electronic cigarettes
- Relationship abuse
- Sexting
- Cyber-etiquette and cyberbullying
- Self- inflicted situations, including self-harm and eating disorders
- Suicidal thoughts