

Definitions and Recognition of Child Abuse

Child abuse may be divided into four categories which have been defined as follows:

Child neglect.

Physical abuse.

Emotional abuse.

Sexual abuse.

Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety.

A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The threshold of significant

harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

In a soccer context it can be: where a child is not provided an appropriate level of care and supervision. In soccer neglect can occur if children do not have proper supervision, clothing, drinks or food or if they are allowed or encouraged to play whilst injured.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- ❖ persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- ❖ conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- ❖ emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;
- ❖ unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child;
- ❖ premature imposition of responsibility on a child;
- ❖ unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way;
- ❖ under or over or under protection of a child;
- ❖ failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for, a child's cognitive and emotional development;

- ❖ use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures;
- ❖ exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example, excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent/carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive).

In a soccer context it can be: where a child is made fun of, criticised, discriminated against, or put under an unrealistic pressure to perform by parents, coaches or spectators who abuse their power.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions become typical of the relationship between the child and parent/carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- ❖ shaking
- ❖ use of excessive force in handling;
- ❖ deliberate poisoning;
- ❖ suffocation;
- ❖ Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness;
- ❖ allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

In a soccer context it can be: where a child is intentionally injured or made to do excessive exercises as punishment, where training methods are inappropriate for the developmental age of the child, where they are allowed play with an injury or where inappropriate drugs or alcohol are offered or accepted.

Sexual Abuse

The definition of child sexual abuse presented here is not a legal definition, and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. For example it can be:

- ❖ exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- ❖ intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- ❖ masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation;
- ❖ sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- ❖ sexual exploitation of a child;
- ❖ non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- ❖ consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means,

for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year old girl and her 17 year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse can occur in soccer.

For example:

- ❖ a child is exposed to, or invited to participate in sexual contact, activity or behaviour
- ❖ if photographs are taken or adapted and placed on child pornography websites
- ❖ where there is inappropriate touching or where intimate relationships occur