

# Forsyth County EMS

## Patient Care Policy: Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting

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### **Policy:**

Child abuse is the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare. The recognition of abuse and the proper reporting is a critical step to improving the safety of children and preventing child abuse.

### **Purpose:**

Assessment of a child abuse case based upon the following principles:

- Protect the life of the child from harm, as well as that of the EMS team from liability.
- Suspect that the child may be a victim of abuse, especially if the injury/illness is not consistent with the reported history.
- Respect the privacy of the child and family.
- Collect as much evidence as possible, especially information.

### **Procedure:**

1. With all children, assess for and document psychological characteristics of abuse, including excessively passivity, compliant or fearful behavior, excessive aggression, violent tendencies, excessive crying, fussy behavior, hyperactivity, or other behavioral disorders
2. With all children, assess for and document physical signs of abuse, including especially any injuries that are inconsistent with the reported mechanism of injury.
3. With all children, assess for and document signs and symptoms of neglect, including inappropriate level of clothing for weather, inadequate hygiene, absence of attentive caregiver(s), or physical signs of malnutrition.
4. Immediately report any suspicious findings to both the receiving hospital (if transported) and to the Department of Social Services (DSS). After office hours, the child protective services worker on call can be contacted by the 911 communications center. While law enforcement may also be notified, North Carolina law requires the EMS provider to report the suspicion of abuse to DSS. EMS should not accuse or challenge the suspected abuser. This is a legal requirement to report, not an accusation. In the event of a child fatality, law enforcement must also be notified.

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