

SBAR: Increased Risk of Child Physical Abuse During the COVID-19 Crisis

Situation: The current shutdown of schools, after school and day care facilities, and many in-home services places children at a significantly increased risk for abuse. Parents and caregivers are isolated, stressed, and lack access to usual sources of support. In addition, many frontline providers in our community who may recognize the signs of possible abuse no longer have direct contact with children.

Background: Parental and caregiver stress is a known risk factor for physical abuse. Financial strain also is a known risk factor: the recession of 2007-2009 led to increased numbers of babies with abusive head trauma across multiple regions of the country.* Infants and toddlers are at highest risk for serious physical abuse and are unable to speak for themselves.

Assessment: Emergency Medicine providers who see children must remain vigilant to identify possible signs of physical abuse.

Recommendations:

1. Use the Matrix (below) to improve recognition of injuries suggestive of abuse for infants younger than 12 months old.
2. Call on our Child Abuse Clinicians for advice: the Yale DART team 203-688-2468 or through Y-access 888-YNHH-BED (888-964-4233) for any child of any age for whom you suspect abuse or neglect.
3. Call the DCF Careline at the dedicated hospital line 860-550-6515 if you suspect abuse or neglect for any child of any age for whom you as a mandated reporter have a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect.