

Children & Youth Advocate Manual

Section 1: Child & Youth Development



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Introduction & Importance

Knowledge of typical child development can aid advocates in helping each child at their life stage and recognizing potential needs they may have. This information can also support advocates when talking with protective caregivers about their children and planning activities that are age-appropriate. The contents of this manual are meant to be informative and NOT meant to be used for any medical or diagnostic purposes.

Youth Development Charts

The following charts outline childhood development in six stages and five domains. Each domain is paired with signs of atypical development that may stem from the impacts of abuse. **PLEASE NOTE** that not all impacts of abuse are the cause of that behavior (i.e. behaviors from illness, mental health, family dynamic changes, etc.). Developmental regression may be seen in any domain across each developmental stage. Impacts and effects from trauma may last into adulthood, especially if there are no appropriate and accessible supports for the family.

These charts are meant to give an idea of typical development and are **NOT** meant to be used for diagnostic purposes. The school-aged and teenage groups have a wide age range due to the amount of overlap within the domains of those ranges. All information in these charts was taken from the resources at the end of this section. These charts can be used as handouts to give to protective caregivers, if appropriate.

Conception to Birth	Toddlers (1 to 3 Years Old)	School-Aged (5 to 11 Years Old)
Infants (Birth to 1 Year Old)	Preschoolers (3 to 5 Years Old)	Teens (11 to 18 Years Old)

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What Caregivers Can Do at Home

Protective caregivers may wonder if there is anything they can do in their home to help mitigate the impacts of abuse. While every child is different, advocates can provide guidance for caregivers on some common themes.

Children dealing with impacts of abuse may respond well to stability, so caregivers may want to focus on creating stable routines and activities for the child. Encouraging caregivers to be aware of the child's triggers is another potential idea. Acknowledging that each family is different, and that each child will react and cope differently to trauma is crucial for working with caregivers to come up with actions they can try at home.

The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) has created a fact sheet with resources to help advocates and caregivers begin to understand the effects of trauma and what support might be beneficial.

We have adapted some of the information into two easy to follow [Coping Charts](#).

Recommended Sleep Times for Age Ranges

Sleep, especially REM or deep sleep, is very important for both mental and physical development. As children get older development slows, which in turn means they require less sleep. Infants and children in the early stages of life need the most sleep because their mental and physical development is happening at the highest rate.

We have put together a short two-page [Recommended Sleep Time Fact Sheet](#) with information from the [National Sleep Foundation](#). Within this fact sheet you can find:

- Sleep duration recommendations
- Tips for having sleep routine conversations with protective caregivers
- Example focused conversation for talking about sleep routines with protective caregivers

Concerns

If there is any concern with a child's development or behavior, talking to the protective caregiver is key. Working with them to understand what they have tried and what they are willing to try is important to build rapport. It also helps to find available resources that are relevant and helpful to the family seeking services.

Before referring a family to services, it is encouraged that advocates talk with the family to see if there are any barriers for seeking specific services. Those barriers could include lack of transportation, lack of health insurance, fear of going to the appointment, poor experiences in the past, etc. Working with the family to find different methods to overcome these barriers is vital to the family's healing journey.

Try reviewing the [Coping Charts](#) to aid in these conversations. This document contains ways for the protective caregiver to help their child cope AND ways the protective caregiver can cope with the secondary trauma they may be feeling by supporting their child.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and Futures Without Violence have created factsheets related to domestic violence. In factsheet #8—[Where to Turn if You Are Worried About Your Child](#) offers guidance for protective caregivers when they have concerns about their children's exposure to abuse.

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Resources

[BabyCenter](#) has more information on domestic violence during pregnancy including how common it is, the effects pregnancy can have on physically abusive partners, and other questions.

[Center for Disease Control](#) has free positive parenting tip sheets. Each tip sheet contains information regarding developmental milestones, positive parenting tips, child safety first, and healthy bodies.

[Helping My Child: A Guide to Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence](#) (pg. 15-24) is a guide for protective caregivers who are targets of violence in a relationship. The goal of this resource is to support the protective caregiver so that they can support their children. Although there are some references to teens, the guide is directed, in particular, to children 12 years and younger.

[Little Eyes, Little Ears](#) (pg. 16-23) is a resource for anyone looking to understand how children experience violence towards their protective caregivers and how those experiences may shape them as they grow, from infancy to adolescence.

[National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#) has resources regarding healthy sexual behavior and advice for parents and professionals on healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior in children and teenagers, including how to respond.

[National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network](#) has charts on common sexual behaviors in childhood and what to teach children about sexual behaviors at different stages of development.

Parenting Abused Children: Hope, Healing and Insight published an article titled [Domestic Violence: the Devastating Effects on Pregnant Women and Unborn Children](#), which includes research on the effects of domestic violence on pregnant women and their unborn children.

*Please notify the LGBTQ & Youth Program Director, [Cody Warner](#), if **ANY** links are no longer working.*
