

Brain Injury and Child Abuse



“At least 1 in 7 children have experienced child abuse or neglect in the past year in the United States. This is likely an underestimate because many cases are unreported.”

CDC.gov

30-60%



30-60% of **perpetrators of Domestic Violence** also abuse children in the household.

One Third



“Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) is a leading cause of physical **child abuse deaths in children under 5** in the United States. AHT accounts for about **one-third of all child maltreatment deaths.**” CDC

Consider that the **parent/caregiver** of a child involved with the Child Welfare System **may have had a brain injury.** The ideas below should be applied to both children and parents/caregivers.



BEST PRACTICE

The Child Welfare System should:

- **SCREEN** for prior history of Brain Injury in caregivers and child
- **ASSESS** Cognitive & Functional Impairment
- **EDUCATE** staff on Brain Injury
- **EDUCATE** the family about Brain Injury
- **PROVIDE** and **TEACH** Accommodations
- **CONNECT** person served with Community Resources

TN Child Abuse Hotline:
(877) 237-0004

COMMON PROBLEMS

After Brain Injury, we often see problems with:

- Attention, memory and new learning
- Slowed speed of processing
- Organization, problem solving & impulsivity
- Irritability, frustration & agitation
- Balance, dizziness & headaches
- Poor awareness of deficits & difficulties
- Difficulty being flexible, poor self-monitoring



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Child Welfare personnel may see:

- Looking uninterested because they cannot pay attention
- Appearance of defiance because they cannot remember the rules
- Slow to follow directions because they cannot process quickly
- Getting into fights because of irritability, anger and impulsivity
- Falling into things, often getting hurt
- Missing appointments because of memory changes
- Gets stuck on an idea or a way of doing something, does not recognize mistakes

There are 4 types of child abuse: physical, sexual, psychological and neglect. Shaken Baby Syndrome is a type of Abusive Head Trauma (a form of physical abuse) that involves shaking.

Common Accommodations for Brain Injury Challenges

Here are some common and simple accommodations:

- Working for shorter periods of time
- Getting rid of distractions around you, like noise or movement
- Taking notes (on paper, in a notebook, on a phone or computer)
- Using a phone to set timers to remember appointments
- Repeating information to the person
- Slowing down when talking; giving them more time to respond
- Giving students extra time on tests
- Sitting in the front of the classroom to reduce distractions
- Coaching the person with the injury to "Stop, think and plan" then act
- Coaching the person to take deep breaths when feeling angry or anxious

Take Note

Tools for Best Practice

Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool: <https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation>

Symptom Questionnaire: <https://mindsourcencolorado.org/adult-symptom-questionnaire/>

Cognitive Strategies Guidebook: [https://mindsourcencolorado.org/wp-](https://mindsourcencolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf)

[content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf](https://mindsourcencolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Strategies-and-Accommodations-Guidebook-CJ-Professionals-5.6.19.pdf)

Brain Injury Screening Resources:

- **OSU TBI Identification Method:** <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/neurological-institute/neuroscience-research-institute/research-centers/ohio-valley-center-for-brain-injury-prevention-and-rehabilitation/osu-tbi-id>
- **NASHIA's OBISSS:** <https://www.nashia.org/obissprogram>



Tennessee Resources

Brain Links' Website with many resources:
[tndisability.org/brain](https://www.tndisability.org/brain)

Brain Links' Toolkits (for Service Professionals and Survivors): <https://www.tndisability.org/brain-toolkits>

TN Department of Health TBI Program:
<https://tinyurl.com/3v5jrdt3>



Tennessee Brighter Futures' Resource Pages & Training for Brain Injury:
<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-brain-injury>



Resource Pages & Training for Child Abuse:
<https://www.tndisability.org/tbf-child-abuse>

TN Brighter Futures is organized and facilitated by Brain Links through a contract from the TN Department of Health TBI Program.



Child Abuse Resources

References:

- Fast Facts: Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>
- The Period of PURPLE Crying, National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, <https://dontshake.org/purple-crying>.
- Brain Injury and Child Welfare Best Practice Guide: Information and Tools for State Agencies. Administration for Community Living Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Grant, Ad Hoc Workgroup on Child Welfare, Feb 2023. <https://www.nashia.org/acl-child-welfare>



<https://www.tndisability.org/brain>
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