

# 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 Injury Screening Resources:

- **NASHIA's OBISSS:** <https://www.nashia.org/obissprogram> – The OBISSS is highly recommended. It is made up of the OSU screening tool, a Symptoms Questionnaire and Strategies. It can be used electronically, on a computer, phone or ipad. It can be self-administered.
- **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>

**Brain Links' Strategies & Accommodations Tool:** <https://www.tndisability.org/rehabilitation-symptom-questionnaire-and-cognitive-strategies>

- Adult: [bit.ly/3FLkz0V](https://bit.ly/3FLkz0V)
- Juvenile: [bit.ly/4iS2bSC](https://bit.ly/4iS2bSC)



## Tennessee Resources

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