WHAT IS PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Child physical abuse is any physical force or action that results in, or may result in, a non-accidental injury of a child. Physical abuse is usually connected to physical punishment or is confused with child discipline. Although an injury resulting from physical abuse is not accidental, the parent or caregiver may not have intended to hurt the child. Physical abuse may involve a single episode or repeated episodes of abuse resulting in bruises, cuts, welts, burns, fractures, internal injuries, or in the most extreme cases, death. The injury may have resulted from severe discipline, including injurious spanking or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age or condition. Generally, physical abuse results from the following:

- Punching
- Kicking
- Shaking
- Stabbing
- Hitting with hand or object
- Poisoning
- Beating
- Biting
- Throwing
- Choking
- Burning
- Suffocating
- Being held under water

Physical abuse that involves external injuries may be more easily detected than other forms of abuse. Some signs of physical abuse may include unexplained injuries, repeated injuries, cigarette burns, burns with a "doughnut" shape on the buttocks, friction burns, unexplained fractures, and changes in child behavior, such as by becoming hyperactive, disruptive, aggressive, complacent, compliant, shy, withdrawn, or uncommunicative. A child may also wear clothing, such as long-sleeves, to purposely hide the injury.