

RECOGNIZING A DRUG ENDANGERED CHILD



Definition of a Drug Endangered Child (DEC)*

Any child, born or unborn, under the age of 18 at risk of neglect or abuse due to: a parent's or caregiver's use, distribution or manufacturing of any controlled substance; or the parent's or caregiver's failure to prevent or protect the child from exposure to the use, distribution or manufacture of any controlled substance.

Harm can include: physical abuse; sexual abuse; medical neglect; lack of basic care including failure to provide meals, sanitary and safe living conditions, or schooling; and injury from explosion, fire, or exposure to toxic chemicals found at clandestine lab sites.

Working together, we can help these children move toward a safer future.

*As defined by the Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children.

How You Can Help

Be a positive example.

Ask how things are at home. Children need to know someone cares.

Let the child talk to you if possible, but don't pry. Remember that parents using drugs can be paranoid and you don't want to make the situation worse for the child.

Call social services to get help for the child and family.

Notify the police immediately if you think the child is in danger.

Get involved in or start a Drug Endangered Children program in your community. You can find a wealth of information at:

www.wisconsindec.org or www.nationaldec.org.

What to Look For

IN CHILDREN

Signs of physical abuse like: bruises on the face, back, neck, buttocks, upper arms, thighs, backs of legs, or genitals; unusual or unexplained cuts or burns; or bite marks.

Nasal and/or eye irritation; extreme hunger; respiratory issues; headaches; dilated pupils.

Difficulty staying awake or focusing because of lack of sleep in a disrupted environment.

Unkempt appearance including poor hygiene and grooming, and wearing clothes that are dirty, excessively shabby or much too small.

Frequent or unexplained absences from school.

Acting out scenes they've witnessed at home like physical violence, sex acts, or drug use.

Using drug terminology or drawing drug scenes.

Depression; apathy; restlessness; hostility; aggression; fear of authority; paranoia.

Unwillingness to go home or displaying fear of being alone with a parent or guardian.

Extreme behaviors ranging from anti-social to excessive attachment to teachers and other adults outside the family.

IN PARENTS OR GUARDIANS

Unhealthy physical appearance which could include pale or yellowed skin, sunken eyes, rotting teeth, dilated pupils, low body weight, heavy sweating with a chemical odor, and scabs or sores on arms, legs, torso, face and or neck.

Needle marks on arms, legs, or neck.

Burns on fingertips.

Nervous, jittery behavior.

Paranoia; preoccupation with weapons and home security.

