

Abuse and Maltreatment

Aliases

Maltreatment of vulnerable populations

Non-accidental trauma

Definitions

1. **Abuse/Maltreatment:** Any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a caregiver or person in a position of power over the patient that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a patient of any age group. EMS clinicians should have a heightened awareness for vulnerable populations which include, but is not limited to, children, elderly, and adults with mental or physical disabilities
2. **Child Abuse/Maltreatment:** Child maltreatment includes any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child. An act of commission (child abuse) is the physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment or neglect of a child or children. An act of omission (child neglect) includes, but is not limited to, failure to provide for the child's needs (e.g., physical, emotional, medical/dental, and educational neglect) and failure to supervise (e.g., inadequate supervision or safety precautions, lack of appropriate car seat use, and exposure to violent or dangerous environments)
3. **Human Trafficking:** when people are abducted or coerced into service (e.g., being forced into servitude without compensation and/or prostitution). Signs may include, but are not limited to, patient with branding/tattoos and environmental clues such as padlocks and/or doorknobs removed on interior doors and intact windows that are boarded up

Patient Care Goals

1. Recognize any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a caregiver or person in a position of power over the patient that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a patient
2. Take appropriate steps to protect the safety of the responders as well as bystanders
3. Remove the patient from immediate danger
4. Assess any patient injuries that may be the result of acute or chronic events
5. Attempt to preserve evidence whenever possible; however, the overriding concern should be providing appropriate emergency care to the patient
6. Complete all mandatory reporting requirements per state guidelines

Patient Presentation

1. Clues to abuse or maltreatment can vary with age group of the patient and type of abuse
2. Not all abuse or maltreatment is physical
3. EMS role is to:
 - a. Document concerns
 - b. Assess potentially serious injuries
 - c. Disclose concerns to appropriate authorities
 - d. Initiate help to get the patient and any other vulnerable individuals at the scene into a safe situation
 - e. Not to investigate or intervene beyond the steps above
 - f. Leave further intervention to law enforcement personnel