

# EMOTIONAL ABUSE



## EMOTIONAL ABUSE (about 7% of reports)

- is mental suffering, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, including inflicting or permitting unjustifiable physical or mental pain (unreasonable either as to necessity or degree)
- includes a repeated pattern or extreme incidents of acts or omissions by the person responsible for the child's care that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders
- may be evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or untoward aggressive behavior toward self or others (Welfare and Institutions Code §300)
- may be based on unreasonable or impossible expectations or result from no consideration of the child's developmental capacity
- is difficult to identify because effects may only be evident in later developmental stages, behaviors of emotionally abused and emotionally disturbed children are often similar, and non-abused children may have behavioral, cognitive, or emotional problems
- includes
  - verbal assault (belittling, screaming, threatening, shaming, blaming, using sarcasm)
  - spurning
  - exploiting/corrupting,
  - mental health/medical/educational neglect
  - unpredictable responses
  - constant family discord
  - treating children as servants or confidants
  - instilling fear through looks, gestures, or destruction of belongings or pets
  - threatening abandonment, suicide, harm to other loved ones
  - threatening punishment by God, police, psyche wards, etc.
  - physical risk or emotional damage from witnessing domestic violence
  - being inconsistent
  - denying emotional responsiveness
  - isolating, controlling access to others
  - continual negative moods
  - double-message communication
  - bossing, always winning

LAW REQUIRES THAT CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE SERVICE  
MAKE A REASONABLE EFFORT  
TO PREVENT THE NEED FOR REMOVAL OF ANY CHILD FROM THE HOME  
AND TO KEEP THE CHILD IN THE CARE OF A NON-OFFENDING PARENT WHENEVER  
POSSIBLE.

Child's safety must be assessed in terms of:

- nature and severity of past violence
- the risk of violence in the future
- the child's degree of exposure and resilience
- the presence of protective factors in the immediate and extended family