

Hi, This is ____ from the African Community Center in Denver, Colorado. I want to explain some things about Child Abuse and Neglect that will help your family build a safe home here in the United States.

I'm going to talk to you about laws in Colorado, what is expected of parents in the US, and some tips on parenting your children as they grow up in America.

First, laws in our state and the United States are created to make sure that kids are safe and healthy. When children are hurt or neglected by adults, the county department of human services--the government--gets involved.

Human Services helps children and families. In cases of child abuse or neglect, Human Services offers, and in some situations requires, classes on parenting, substance abuse recovery, and counseling services. In extreme cases the Department of Human Services will remove children and put them in a safe home while parents are equipped with tools to better care for their children and keep them safe.

Let me explain child abuse:

When a parent or adult caregiver injures a child, which may include bruises, broken bones, burns, or bleeding, it is called *child abuse*. In the United States, spanking that leaves a bruise or damages a child's body is illegal. For example, hitting a child with a stick that leaves bruises or causes bleeding is abuse. It is also abuse if you cut a child with a knife or burn their skin.

Another type of abuse is sexual abuse. This is where an adult engages in sexual behavior with a child under 18. This is illegal, and there are serious legal consequences for sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse happens when a parent doesn't care for the emotional needs of their children. For example, telling a child she is stupid is emotional abuse. Another example is putting a child in a closet with the lights off when they are in trouble. Making children watch videos of torture or threatening them with a knife is also abuse.

Now, let me explain neglect.

Neglect happens when a parent refuses to provide a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, appropriate clothing, education, and medical needs. An example is when parents don't feed their children or send them to school.

Neglect is also when a parent leaves young children alone without supervision. It is your job as a parent to keep your children safe. An example of child neglect is letting a 4-year-old child play outside without an adult watching to make sure they are safe. Another example is leaving an 8-year-old child home alone while the parent goes to work.

Moving to a new country is very difficult for families, especially while your children go to school and learn American culture. The best thing you can do here in the US for your kids is to pay attention to them. Meet their teachers. Do homework with them. And praise their good behavior.

When things get difficult, be patient and ask for help. Reach out to your support systems including your community leaders, refugee case managers, and church or mosque leaders.

Another option is to call and talk to someone, in your language, who understands the difficulties you are facing. Call 1-844-493-TALK (8255).

As a parent, you should also make sure your child is safe from other adults. If you believe that someone is abusing or neglecting your child or any child, call 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437).