State and Local

Experts: Emotional abuse doesn't carry telltale signs

By Max Statton Reporter

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Just because a child doesn't always seem to have bruises from "falling down" doesn't necessarily mean he isn't victims of child abuse. There ets is a are forms of abuse that don't carry a t of The teltale sign—like emotional abuse.

In the last 15 years, child abuse neglect and its often ignored sibling, emotional abuse, has become a manual medical sibling abuse. who jor social issue, says Stephen Antler, chairman of the School of Social ited State Work in Boston, Mass.

"The time is now for us to realize and correct the problem," Antler says. "If we can make the public un-derstand about abuse and neglect, r task is much easier.'

Initially, he says, people must learn to recognize the different types of child mistreatment.

Doug Smith, a retired family psy-ologist from Houston, says there e three major divisions of non-sex-

"Physical abuse is defined as the ual beating or striking of the child hile emotional abuse is verbal yeling, teasing and belittling the child,"
Smith stressed. "Neglect is more
what a parent doesn't do rather than visitor what he does do.'

Smith says he fears people don't he use of realize how bad the problem is. "Society doesn't realize how many nilies actually do abuse their chil-

y. A few ity campa According to the Texas Department of Human Resources in Bryan, ally located 13,885 valid cases of child mistreatent were reported in Texas last ear and more than 100 cases re-Ited in a child's death.

But these figures are derived only from reported cases. The DHR estimates 35 percent of the cases aren't reported because of a lack of underinding or just an unwillingness to

Unreported cases often occur in igher economic classes, says Linda losey, a child psychologist in Bryan. "Child abuse goes on without resorts because people feel it only appens to poor people like on telesision," Hosey says. "It doesn't just occur in poor families; it doesn't discriminate at all as far as socio-eco-

Under Texas law - chapter 34 of the Texas Family Code — anyone with knowledge about child mistreatment is required to report it to the proper authorities. It also says people who report abuse or neglect are immune from criminal liability if

without malice.

"Good faith" means the person was reasonable in getting the facts while "without malice" means the person didn't intend to injure or vioate the person's rights.

the report is made in good faith and

Failure to report child mistreatment is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by fines up to \$1,000 and a

180-day imprisonment.

To report a suspected case of mistreatment, the DHR recommends that three steps be taken.

An oral report should be made immediately to the nearest DHR Child Protection Services office or to the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-252-5400). A written report should be submitted within five days to the state chapter DHR in Austin and an oral report should be given

to the local police.

Antler, also an associate professor at Boston University, says even if people realize that reporting child abuse is the law, many don't do it.

"Even with the law there, many people don't recognize abuse," he says. "You've got to know the signs and symptoms in the child before you can report someone.

Hosey says physical abuse usually is the easiest to spot.

"As far as physical abuse is concerned, a child who repeatedly has bruises or broken bones without plausible excuses is a possible case,"

Other signs of physical abuse the DHR says to watch for include frequent disobedience, unusual shyness with friends, avoidance of physical contact and the wearing of clothes that may hide injuries.

But Hosey emphasizes that emo-

tional abuse is harder to recognize than physical abuse.

"The signs are more verbal," she says. "Kids show more negative selfworth, causing them to lie, cheat, fight and steal. The children are talked down to so much, they believe themselves to be bad, so they act that

Śmith adds another sign to Ho-

"The children often tend to either act much older than they really are, or revert to their early childhood," he says. "The usual signs of the latter are late thumb sucking and bedwet-

ting."

The DHR lists yelling at, teasing and belittling children as common forms of emotional abuse.

Antler believes this abuse is the most difficult to indicate.

"With physical abuse, the bruises are there," he says. "With neglect, the child often is dirty and unkempt.
"Verbal abuse is different. It's easy
to confuse a shy or aggressive child
as being emotionally abused."

Child neglect, however, is a more common problem, he says.

"It's happening everywhere," he says. "Most of the time we don't even realize it. Parents may travel frequently, have financial problems or they just plain don't know how to raise kids. These kids often become the underachievers of tomorrow

Neglect also tops the DHR's list as the most frequent form of mistreat-

Different types of neglect are abandonment of the child by the parent, inadequate medical, educational or nutritional care, lack of support and affection for the child's work and an attitude of over-permissiveness toward the child.

To recognize neglect, one should look for dirty clothing, tiredness, a need for medical care, loneliness, large mood swings and apathy.

As tough as recognition of emo-tional mistreatment may be, type-casting the parents is much harder.

"Abuse just doesn't discriminate,"
Hoscy says. "The parents can be from any race, class or area."



Did I Make It?

Tom Streety, a hopeful August graduate, reads the lists by Heaton Hall Thursday to see if he has

been "red-dotted." A red dot by a student's name must be cleared before the student can graduate.

SMU probe committee to keep records from Attorney General

DALLAS (AP) — Records of a bishops' committee probe into the football scandal at Southern Methodist University won't be released to Attorney General Jim Mattox, a committee spokesman says

The Rev. Spurgeon Dunnam III said Wednesday the panel will send Mattox a letter stating that the committee is separate from the university and members will honor their pledge to witnesses to keep testimony se-

"What the bishop (committee chairman Louis Showengerdt) related to me was that everyone involved has the same attitude, which was that we decided this before the committee ever began its work," Dunnam said. "We would only release (the records) if ordered to by a

Schowengerdt, of Albuquerque, N.M., read Dunnam a draft of the letter to Mattox during a telephone conversation Wednesday.

Mattox is investigating whether university officials violated state regulations governing charitable trusts. SMU operates as a non-profit trust and is owned by the United Methodist Church.

He has asked the university and the bishop's committee to turn over all records of their investigations into the scandal. Mattox said he is entitled to the committee's records because it is an arm of the university.

Committee members claim Mattox has no right to the records because their inquiry was conducted independently.
In February, the NCAA banned SMU's 1987 football

program, citing booster-funded improper payments to athletes. The school's 1988 season, which had been limited to seven road games, was voluntarily scrapped by school officials.

The bishops' committee conducted an extensive probe into the matter and earlier this summer released

a 48-page report of its findings.

The report said top SMU officials participated in an elaborate scheme to conceal the fact that Gov. Bill Clements approved illicit payments to student athletes while the school was under probation.

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