**WHAT IS ABUSE? \***

Abuse is an act by parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust that is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or welfare.

* **Physical Abuse:** physical injury, threat of injury or creation of danger, risk of death or impairment. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, head injury, burns, scalding, poisoning, welts, cuts, bruises, internal injury, dislocation, stabbing wound.
* **Physical Neglect**: failure to provide food, appropriate clothing, shelter or supervision for a child if that child’s health or safety is endangered. May be chronic or a one-time critical occurrence.
* **Sexual Abuse**: Any act defined in the *Code of Virginia* that is committed, or allowed to be committed, on a child by his/her parent or other person responsible for the child’s care. Examples: sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, or exposure to pornographic material
* **Medical Neglect**: failure obtain and/or follow through with a regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition, which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.
* **Failure to thrive**: A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.
* **Mental Abuse/Neglect**: A pattern of acts or omissions by the caregiver that results in harm to a child’s psychological or emotional health or development.
* **Educational Neglect**: The failure of the child’s caretaker to ensure that the child attends school or an approved alternative program of study
* **Bizarre Punishment**: Any actions in which the caregiver uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures of devices to modify the child’s behavior.
* From Virginia Conference Protection Policies, Rev. 5/24/13