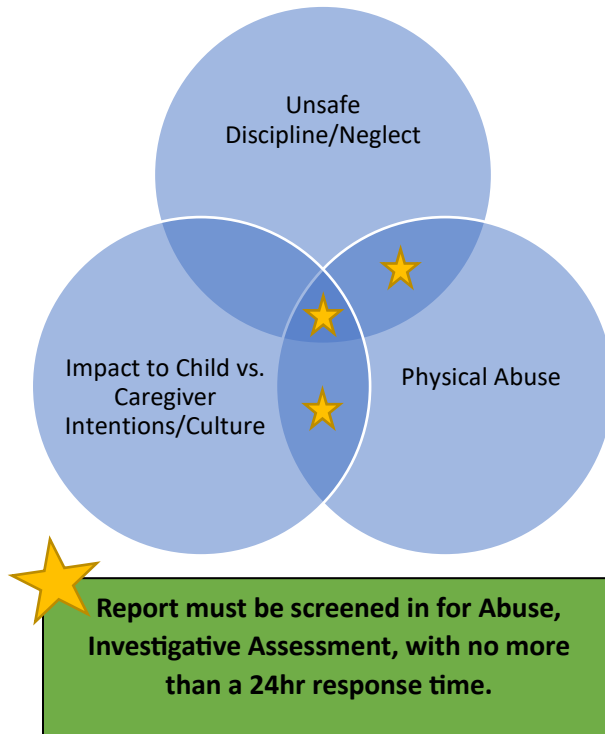


Child Welfare Resources for Screening and Assessing Unsafe Discipline Versus Physical Abuse

In general, children should be free from any marks or bruises due to a caretaker’s discipline or corporal (physical) punishment. This guidance can help workers distinguish between unsafe discipline/neglect and abuse, and how to screen and assess accordingly and in line with NC child welfare policy.



Workers must ask about and consider a child’s:

- Age
- Developmental status
- Other vulnerabilities such as physical, mental or emotional needs

These factors can help distinguish between unsafe discipline/neglect and abuse.

Unsafe Discipline/Neglect	Physical Abuse
<p>-A child 4 years and older where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline results in minor bruises, welts or other soft tissue injuries on the body that do not require medical attention AND • No other vulnerable factors, such as medically fragile, developmental delays exist • Unreasonable expectations based on child’s age/developmental status/vulnerability factors 	<p>-Any child aged 3 years or younger subject to corporal (physical) punishment or sentinel injuries.</p> <p>-Any aged child where caregiver has caused or allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising, lacerations, welts, or swelling on the head, face, eyes, throat, chest, belly/abdomen, genitalia, or other sensitive and vulnerable areas of the of the body • Substantial bruising, welts, or swelling and any lacerations on legs, arms, back or buttock • Fractured/broken bones • Injuries requiring medical attention, even if medical attention has not been sought • Non-accidental burns, punching, kicking or choking (blocking of a child’s airway) • Forced ingestion of non-food items, dangerous amounts of food or water • Use of restraints not intended for child (ropes, duct tape, swaddling too tightly) • Extensive physical activity or chores beyond the child’s reasonable ability • Withholding or restricting the child’s access to basic needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, hygiene facilities) <p>-Any of the above injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And the perpetrator is unknown • Are poorly explained, or reason is not plausible
Impact to Child Versus Caregiver Intentions /Culture	
<p>The impact of discipline or corporal (physical) punishment to the child must be considered <u>regardless</u> of the caretaker’s expressed intent or culture.</p> <p>This includes any injuries to a child that result from domestic violence/discord, regardless of the caretaker’s intentions or target.</p> <p>Caregiver intentions and culture can be an effective place to begin engagement on behavior change, but do not cancel out neglect and abuse thresholds.</p> <p>Child welfare workers should provide judgement free education and support to caregivers around discipline. Discipline is to teach and not instill fear. The focus should be on disciplining children safely, in a calm state when caregivers are not likely to lose control, which can lead to abusive acts.</p>	

**This document is meant to guide and support Child Welfare workers and examples are not totally inclusive of possible reports of abuse and neglect.*