



Kinderschutz hat einen Namen

**Violence and sexual assaults
on children and adolescents**

Prevention - Detection - Help

die möwe

We help children, young people and their caregivers with incidents of physical, emotional and sexual violence and the resulting concerns.

Services provided at the six **die möwe-child protection centres**:

- Telephone and personal advice
- Online advice
- Crisis intervention when violence occurs
- Psychotherapy support
- Psychological diagnosis

die möwe-Prevention provides

- Workshops for children and young people
- Information events and workshops for parents
- Lectures and intervention training for educators

gutbegleitet – family support

- Family support for parents of young children and pregnant women
- Crisis intervention for families in exceptionally stressful situations
- Further assistance within the Early Aid Network

Violence -a definition

Violence takes very different forms. Violence involves threats and behaviour with the intent of harm directed at persons or objects. Violence usually occurs through physical effort and/or psychological and verbal means, causing physical and/or psychological injuries to victims.

Violence against children and adolescents is particularly harmful and has been banned in Austria by several laws for 25 years(prohibition of violence in education). Since 2011, the right of the child to be protected against all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation (Article 19) enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, has had constitutional status in Austria.

Finally, the National Council sent a socio-political signal with the Federal Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children and declared the comprehensive welfare of children and adolescents to be the basic state goals

Article 5 states:

1. Every child has the right to non-violent education. Physical punishment, infliction of emotional suffering, sexual abuse and other abuse are prohibited. Every child has the right to protection against economic and sexual exploitation.

2. Every child as a victim of violence or exploitation shall have the right to adequate compensation and rehabilitation. Exact details are determined by the laws.

The four main forms of violence against children

Physical violence

Bodily (physical) violence encompasses all serious and minor forms of abuse directed against the body:

- beating (including slaps and clap)
Shaking (of babies and small children)
- pushing, kicking, pinching, punching, boxing
- violent holding (restriction of movement)
- Throwing objects at the child
- Pulling hair
- Throwing the child against the wall or other objects
- Burning (with cigarettes, with hot water)
- attacks with weapons, etc., up to attempted murder or murder.

Tolerance and sanctioning of physical violence is subject not only to the legal provisions but also to social norms, which determine whether an act of violence can be used as a tolerable sanction of misconduct (such as the much-quoted "gsunde Watschn") and is understood or considered to be ill-treatment.

Psychological abuse, emotional abuse

Psychological (mental) abuse encompasses all forms of violence aimed at the integrity, self-worth and dignity of the person. Psychological violence is often exercised by verbal means, but it also includes exclusion, non-verbal devaluations (e.g. gestures and acts of contempt) and the systematic disruption of personal integrity (stalking, persecution with legal means, slander, etc.).

- Humiliation
- Insults
- constant criticism
- intentional harassment
- Exploiting the children as a partner substitute
- Disdain and Neglect
- Non-compliance with agreements
- Sadistic forms of education
- Mocking, irony and sarcasm
- intentional ignorance and silence.

Witnessing other forms of violence can also be psychological violence. For example, when physical violence is used against important people in the victim's environment or in things (e.g. the destruction of things that have a special value for the victim) or on (house) animals.

Neglect

Neglect includes inadequate care, non-care and forgetting, such as withholding support and care. Neglect has physical components when, for example, diet, personal care and medical

assistance are not given sufficiently and psychological components are encouraged and supported in their development when children are not supervised according to their age.

A lack of emotional attention and the ignorance of children's needs for closeness and interactive contact, as well as a lack of sensitivity and attention in dealing with children can also mean psychological neglect despite providing the best basic care. Other newer forms of psychological violence in the context of child-rearing include too frequent and too long of exposure of children to media, the consumption of age-inappropriate and violent media content (violent computer games or films, etc.).

Sexual violence

Sexual violence refers to the sexually motivated exploitation of power and dependency between an adult or older adolescent and a child or adolescent. The conscious, manipulative and intentional abuse of a child to satisfy the adults or older adolescents own sexual needs. Sexually abusive acts and sexual abuse include:

- Making pornographic photos/films of children
- showing sexual images, films or own sexual organs (exhibitionism)
- sexually coloured language
- derogatory sexual remarks about the child's body
- forcing children to witness adult sexual acts
- touching the child inappropriately (in a sexual manner)
- forcing the child to touch the adult's body or genitals (in a sexual manner)
- performing oral or sexual practices on the child or with the child
- Rape

Who are the perpetrators?

Violence takes place predominantly in the social area (i.e. in the close family or acquaintances) of the child, this happens more with sexual abuse and the age of the child (younger more often). Places of violence can be institutions (schools, homes, sports clubs) where the child should feel safe. The perpetrators are usually well known and familiar to the child. They are close relatives such as father and mother, grandparents, cousin/cousin, uncle or other reference persons to whom there is dependence, such as stepparents, family friends, parents, flatmates, neighbours and other adults or older or older adolescents from the familiar environment of the child.

On the other hand, direct violence and especially sexual abuse by strangers is very rare in proportion to the number of violent acts, the risk of physical violence from strangers increases with age (adolescence), but mostly happens in the context of school, leisure or work.

What the perpetrators often have in common is that they mostly live according to their egocentric interests, often lead a perfect double life, have no feelings of guilt despite the knowledge of the criminality of their actions and often deny and play down their attacks. Many of the perpetrators have been abused as teenagers.

Sexual violence is carried out intentionally and consciously and after a period of initiation of the victim. Perpetrator strategies include the targeted selection of vulnerable victims, creeping

approaches, the sexualization of trusting relationships, the use of specific threats and the complicity of the victims.

No one can sexually abuse a girl or a boy by mistake. The difference between tenderness and sexual abuse is very noticeable for those affected. Women as perpetrators of sexualized violence are difficult to fit into our images of sexualized violence, but they too can be abusers: for example, in the context of nursing acts, as an experienced sexual partner, by abusing children as a substitute for partners, or as a co-wisher and accomplice of abusive men.

Increased risk of violence

Although violence can affect any child, some children are at increased risk of violence:

- Children without a social network that provides warmth, understanding and security
- Children who receive too little attention, love, security and recognition from their caregivers
- Children who believe that adults are always right
- Children who have not learned that they themselves are important and valuable
- Children who have seen adults who, unopposed and unsanctioned, harm children
- Children who do not have knowledge of the right to self-determination.
- Children who have not learned to perceive or name their own feelings
- Children who have not been sexually or insufficiently sexually informed
- Children who are denied their own feelings and needs
- Children who often experience that the feelings and needs of adults are more important than those of children
- Children who are often not listened to or not believed
- Children with disabilities and developmental disorders or children in weakened positions
- Children who grow up socially isolated
- Children without trustees

Symptoms of violence

Although children and adolescents rarely speak directly and openly about experiences of violence and sexual abuse, they send signals to draw attention to their plight.

The signs can be very different and varied. Especially in the case of psychological and sexual violence, there are usually no clear symptoms.

Possible indications are determined by the age of the child. Younger children suffer mainly from anxiety, nightmares and developmental disorders. Later, school problems and aggressive, hyperactive, sexualized or distancing behaviour also appear. Some children also seem completely problem-free and unobtrusive from the outside, because they hide their inner distress. In adolescence, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, substance abuse and social withdrawal increase.

In any case, sudden behavioural changes, strong mood swings and verbal or other indications should be taken seriously and observed as suspicious. The following symptoms, especially if they occur cumulatively, suggest that a child is at risk:

1. Visible injuries and bruises

blackeye, cuts or other injuries to the lips and in the oral cavity, missing or broken teeth, shaped bruises (e.g. hand and fingerprint shapes), marks around the neck indicating strangulation, bite injuries, bruising and abrasions, traces of bondage, ripped-out tufts of hair, burns from cigarettes, bloody urine, hypothermia, multiple injuries, self-harm to suicidal behaviour, psychosomatic illnesses,

2. general indications and behavioural abnormalities in children such as,

- inadequate nutrition, clothing, personal care or medical care.
- Development gaps
- Sudden incomprehensible behavioural changes, e.g. changes in activity, aggressiveness, unexplained and unusual behavioural practices for the child
- Sexualized language / gestures: sexual expressions and gestures, excessive use of dirty jokes
- School performance problems, such as lack of concentration, memory gaps, perceptual difficulties
- Change of mood, exaggerated cheerfulness, aggression or depression
- Social retreat/ flight into a fantasy world
- Fear of physical contact or increased inappropriate need for physical closeness
- Compulsions i.e. constant repetitions in thinking, speaking or acting, e.g. washing

3. general indications and behavioural abnormalities in parents

changing information on the origin of injuries, injury picture at odds with the cause of the accident, frequent changes of doctor and hospital, delayed visit of the doctor, aggressive behaviour of parents, helpless behaviour of parents

Why are children silent?

Knowledge: Children often cannot classify and understand assaults as such, depending on their age and stage of development, and sometimes the words needed are literally missing.

Confusion: Violence and abuse confuse feelings and cast doubt on one's perception. Children and affected adolescents are manipulated and can no longer assess what is normal, what can and cannot be.

Pressure for secrecy: Children and adolescents are subtly or threatened not to talk about what is happening.

Fear: Children and adolescents are intimidated and often fear terrible consequences if someone learns of the attacks.

Guilt: Children and adolescents experience recriminations and are told that they themselves have done something wrong or want it anyway.

Shame: Children and young people are ashamed of these experiences.

Conflict of loyalty: Children and adolescents try to protect important caregivers, even if they have been injured by them.

Fainting: Children and young people feel alone and helpless. Often, they are convinced that no one would want to believe them or can help them.

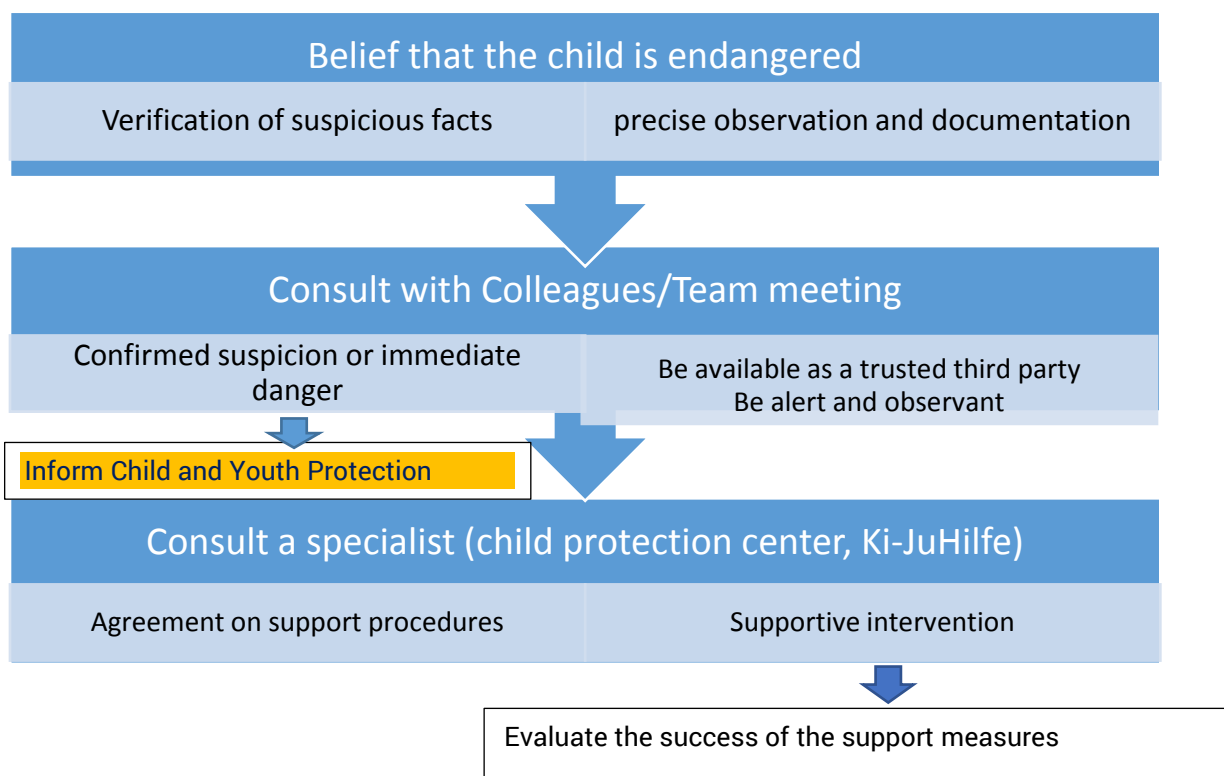
What to do in case of suspicion

Vague suspicion: Your observations are ambiguous, and attacks may or may not be present.

Procedure: Document your observations and contact a professional counselling institution, e.g. a Child Protection Centre. Get their consultation and support!

Concrete suspicion: Clear signs of violence (e.g. injuries) or concrete statements about experiences of violence by a child/adolescent suggest an urgent suspicion. Contact the local children's and youth welfare and make a report to ensure the best interests of the child.

Important! Get support from a professional institution, e.g. Child Protection Centre. If you become a witness of acts of violence yourself or receive credible reports (oral report, video, etc.) and thus suspect an acute or massive danger, a complaint to the police is the right step. Get advice beforehand.



How do I behave towards an affected child?

Keep calm

Acting hastily to intervene or confront can cause harm. Emotional distress and insecurity can be triggered by confrontation (or presumption) of violence. Consult with trusted colleagues and/or contact relevant counselling centres.

Believe the victim

Abused children need people who believe them. Sometimes it is the fear of wrongly suspecting someone that prevents them from believing the victim's clues. It is easier to believe a child if you first focus exclusively on the child's concerns and put the identification of an offender (or perpetrator) or writing a report on hold.

Often the behaviour of the children is contradictory. The "betrayal" often makes them afraid and guilty, and they may withdraw their statements.

Beware of "why" questions

Even if you don't intend to, "why" questions can be perceived by the child as blaming.

Accept the victim's attachment to the perpetrator

It is important for children to be able to express their positive feelings towards the perpetrator. Condemn the behaviour of the perpetrator, but not the entire person of the perpetrator.

Stay in touch with the child

Offer yourself to the child as a trusted adult. Possibly offer children's books or materials to the child in order to get into conversation more easily.

Take notes or draw pictures

Write down what the child has stated, what they have said, record the information literally (word for word), if possible. Separate what you have heard, observed and your own explanations and interpretations.

Conversation with children if you suspect abuse

- Choose a protected and calm place
- Believe in the child. Take seriously what children and teenagers tell you
- Encourage the child or youth to communicate – do not ask direct questions: address observed feelings (it seems to me that you are a little afraid, you look so depressed, etc.)
- Address children's fears:
Confidentiality, threat, unbelievability, consequences of the exposure
- Ask open questions: what (what happened, etc), how (how did it go, how was that), who (who was there, who did something, who was involved), where (where did it) happens) - according to the motto "less is more": rather ask fewer questions
- Do not ask "why questions": avoid questions that require explanations

- Use compassionate (empathic) communication and avoid judgmental statements
- Only give promises to children and young people that you know you can keep
- Tell the children why and with whom you need to talk to about what happened
- Let the child know that they will be kept up to date on every further step
- Thank the child at the end of the interview for their trust and courage
- After the interview, prepare a protocol that is as accurate as possible (date, location, time, quotations, etc.)

Notification of a child's welfare risk

Obligation to notify in accordance with Section 37 of the Federal Children's and Youth Welfare Act 2013:

If a specific significant risk to the welfare of children (e.g. by abuse, neglect or sexual abuse) cannot be prevented, it is required to notify the child and youth welfare agency immediately:

- Courts, authorities and bodies of public oversight
- Facilities for the care or teaching of children and adolescents
- Psychosocial counselling facilities
- Private institution of child and youth welfare
- Hospitals and spas
- Home nursing facilities
- Persons who take part in the teaching or care of children and adolescents on a freelance basis
- Freelance persons appointed by the Children's and Youth Aid members of statutory health professions.

The notification must be made by the institution / institution, if the notification obligation does not apply to self-employed persons. The decision on a notification should be made by at least two specialists (four-eyes principle)

Criminal acts against children and adolescents:

§ 137 ABGB prohibition of violence in education
§ 206 StGB: Severe sexual abuse of minors
§ 207 StGB: Sexual abuse of minors
§ 207a StGB: Pornographic representations of minors
§ Section 212 Abuse: of a relationship of authority

Notification rights and obligation to notify:

Individuals have the right, but not the obligation, to report crimes. They also have the right to make notices about child welfare risks in child and youth welfare.

Authorities are obliged to file a complaint with the Public Prosecutor's Office or the Security Authority in the event of suspicion of a criminal offence affecting their scope.

Notification and notification obligations are regulated under Section 37 of the Federal Children's and Youth Welfare Act 2013, Section 78 stPO obligation to notify and Section 48 SchUG obligations of the school to communicate.

Please use the following form to report the abuse:

<https://www.bmfj.gv.at/dam/jcr:86bcb6c5-8ef1.../Meldeformular.pdf>

Who can help?

Child protection institutions provide anonymous advice, free of charge.

In the event of a suspicion, they offer support and advice for next steps and support in the event of uncertainty. Psychologists and psychotherapists work in child protection institutions to help process sexual abuse experiences and other experiences of violence.

The Kinder and Jugendhilfe has the central objective of ensuring the child's well-being and has the legal mandate to act in the event of a notification and to clarify a possible child welfare risk as well as to arrange helpful support measures.

The *Police* are obliged to investigate crimes, with the aim of investigating the crime and prosecuting perpetrators. In the event of immediate danger or concrete evidence, the police are the right point of contact.

Neglect, abuse and mistreatment of minors are among the "official offences", i.e. a corresponding complaint must be followed up by the authorities and cannot be withdrawn by the person providing the information. It is therefore particularly important to find the "appropriate time" for a complaint to the police.

Documentation: Written notes or other forms of documentation are of great importance in all cases of suspected sexual violence. Please document with date, keywords and in detailed literal documentation of what you have seen or heard (observations).

How does the Youth Office react?

A clarification procedure is initiated, whereby the type of risk that is suspected determines the protocol of the social workers.

In principle, the:

- Four-eyes principle
- Personal conversation with the child/adolescent
- Contact the family, the person responsible for custody
- Responding to reported perception

If the protection of the child/adolescent is not sufficiently guaranteed during the family investigation procedure, temporary accommodation may be provided in a crisis centre. The decisive factor for this is:

- The social worker risk assessment after considering the subjective experience of the child/adolescent at risk
- The social-worker assessment of parenting capacity, the reactions and presentations of the persons responsible for care, as well as their awareness of problems and the willingness to change
- Survey of the social environment, information gathered from (pedagogical) caregivers.

If, after completion of the clarification procedure, it is established that there is a risk to the welfare of the child, the Youth Office may offer parents measures to support education: together with the parents, a written agreement is drawn up in which the necessary interventions and work steps are documented. This is intended to lead to the necessary change in the family situation and to eliminate the risk to the child.

Compliance with this agreement is required and is monitored by social workers. In the event of persistent danger, a lack of awareness of the problem and a unwillingness to change, the child must be placed outside the family. Since the protection of confidentiality is indispensable for successful social work, especially in the investigation of a possible child welfare risk, the employees working in the youth welfare are subject to the statutory duty of confidentiality.

Prevention

Effective prevention programs are always focused on children as well as adults (parents and educators) in the child's environment!

The objectives of the prevention programmes are:

- Raising awareness among parents and caregivers.
- Encouraging discussion of psychological, physical and sexual violence against children
- Mediation of evidence-based information on violence
- Information and empowerment of children
- Mediation of the seven preventive messages to children

The responsibility for protecting girls and boys from violence and abuse is always the responsibility of adults.

The 7 Messages of Prevention

- Trust your feelings!
It is important to be able to distinguish pleasant from unpleasant feelings and it is good to talk about it.
- There are good secrets and bad secrets!
Bad secrets are to be told to trusted adults. Burdensome secrets should be passed to trusted adults.
- Your body is yours!

There are pleasant and unpleasant touches. Every child has the right to take care of his/her own body.

- You may say NO!
Respect for each other is important. This includes considering the want and will of other persons.
- Adults also make mistakes!
The responsibility for the use of violence lies with the adults and it is never the fault of children.
- Get help and talk about it!
Talk about it until someone listens and helps properly.
- Violence is never okay
There are alternatives to violence – it is the only way it can be stopped

New forms of media violence

Modern media such as the Internet, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter are part of the everyday life of many people. Communication in the cyber world has become a matter of course in the everyday life of children and adolescents – thus sexual abuse is also possible using digital media.

Cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying, cyber-grooming and happy slapping are examples of new forms of violence.

Access to violent, sexist and pornographic depictions is also becoming easier and children are being abused both as victims (child pornography) and as customers (happy slapping).

There are violent offenders who contact children as potential victims in chat rooms as well as social networks and via internet-ready game forums.

Young people, parents and educators are hardly prepared for newer problems such as sexting (= digital sending of intimate recordings) or cyber-grooming (= initiation of sexual abuse via network-based communication channels).

Learning together about careful, conscious and well-informed handling of the possibilities and dangers of new media is the best protection against attacks and uncontrollable dynamics in the worldwide web (www).

References

Specialized books in German for Adults

Saferinternet.at: CH@dvice - Handbuch für Pädagog/innen: Sex und Gewalt in digitalen Medien. Prävention, Hilfe & Beratung. Zum download

De Waal, H.; Thoma, C.; Was tun bei Verdacht auf sexuellen Missbrauch an Kindern und Jugendlichen? Wien 2000.

Kerger-Ladleif, C. Kinder beschützen! Sexueller Missbrauch. Eine Orientierung für Mütter und Väter. Köln. mebes & noack 2012

Ganz schön blöd – Tipps gegen Angstmache, Erpressung und sexuelle Belästigung, zartbitterKöln, www.zartbitter.de

Gewalt gegen Kinder und Jugendliche. Ein Leitfaden für die Kinderschutzarbeit in Gesundheitsberufen; Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend, Wien: Broschüre 2008

Freiberger, A.-M. et al. Praxishandbuch Kinder- und Jugendschutz. Wien. ForumVerlag. 2013

Deegener, G.: *Kindesmissbrauch*. Erkennen – helfen – vorbeugen Beltz Verlag, Weinheim und Basel, 5., komplett überarbeitete Auflage 2010

Enders U. (Hrsg.): *Zart war ich, bitter war's*. Sexueller Missbrauch an Mädchen und Jungen. Erkennen – Schützen – Beraten. Köln, Volksblatt Verlag, 1990.

Helmut de Waal, Christoph Thoma (2000): *Was tun bei Verdacht auf SMB an Kindern und Jugendlichen? Ein Leitfaden für wirksames (berufliches) Handeln*.

Lercher L., Derler B., Höbel U.: *Missbrauch verhindern*. Handbuch zu präventivem Handeln in der Schule. Reihe Dokumentation, Band 11. Wien, Wiener Frauenverlag, 1995.

Bain, O., Sanders M.: *Wege aus dem Labyrinth*. Fragen von Jugendlichen zu sexuellem Missbrauch. Donna Vita, 1993.

Specialized books in German for daycare and Elementary Schools

Sonja Blattmann, Gesine Hansen: *Ich bin doch keine Zuckermäus*

Neinsagegeschichten, Lieder mit CD, didaktisches Material ; Verlag mebes & noack

Gisela Braun: *Ich sag Nein* Arbeitsmaterialien gegen den sexuellen Missbrauch an Mädchen und Jungen Mülheim, Verlag an der Ruhr, 1989.

Ursula Enders/Dorothee Wolters: *Wir können was, was ihr nicht könnt!*

Ein Bilderbuch über Zärtlichkeit und Doktorspiele, Anrich Verlag, 1996

Marion Mebes: *Kein Küsschen auf Kommando*, Donna Vita 1997

Mein Körper gehört mir - ein Aufklärungsbuch von pro familia

Löffel H., Manske C.: *Ein Dino zeigt Gefühle*. Ruhnmark, Donna Vita Verlag, 1996.

Ursula Enders/Dorothee Wolters: *Luis*, 2000 Beltz Verlag, Weinheim und Basel

Reihe Kosmolino, Lesen - Spielen - Experimentieren: *Lachen, weinen, glücklich sein – was sind Gefühle?*, KOSMOS Verlag, 2009

Kapella O. et al. Gewalt in der Familie und im nahen sozialen Umfeld. Österreichische Prävalenzstudie zur Gewalt an Frauen und Männern. BMWFJ 2011

(K)ein sicherer Ort. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Familie und Jugend, Wien 2010