

## Child Abuse Photographic Documentation Pocket Guide

Social Services law allows for photographic documentation of visible trauma when child abuse is suspected.

### Consent

- Parent or guardian permission for taking photographs should be sought but is not necessary for treatment or child abuse evidentiary purposes once suspected child abuse has been reported to the State Central Register.
- Consent can be part of general consent form or a specific form.
- Parents as well as adolescents who are mature minors can provide consent.
- Document the consent or refusal in the medical record.
- If a child or adolescent patient refuses to be photographed, do not attempt to take photographs. Force should never be used.

### Procedures

- Use digital or film pictures or video for photographic documentation.
- When a colposcope is used to record genital examinations, use a digital camera to document non-genital findings.
- Identify the name of the patient, the medical record number, and the date the images were taken on the memory card, CD, DVD, virtual file, videocassette, slides, or photographs.
- Document in the medical record that photographs were taken or that the examination was videotaped.
- Provide written documentation of all physical findings in the medical record.
- Store the images, video, CD, DVD, or photographic memory card in a secure place per institutional protocol.
- It is best to back up digital images on a secure server.

### Photographs

- Photograph all genital examinations of children, even when there are no abnormal findings. This facilitates a second opinion without having a second examination.
- Photograph all bruises and injuries in suspected physical as well as sexual abuse cases.

### General Photography Tips

- Use the highest megapixels available when using a digital camera.
- Adjust the focus and lighting to get a clear picture.
- Document a finding with several shots.

### Photography Tips for Non-Genital Findings

- Take a picture of the patient's face and a full body photograph for identification purposes.
- Position the camera perpendicular to the finding to avoid distortion.
- Use an uncluttered, neutral-colored background.
- Use a color wheel or grayscale for color comparisons when possible.
- Use a ruler to document the size of a finding.
- Use the rule of three. Take at least two shots of three orientations: full body, medium range of the finding, and close up.

Adapted from Taking Good Photographs,  
<http://www.childabusemd.com/documentation/documenting-photographic.shtml>.

### CHAMP Photographic Documentation

**Practice Recommendations** For more information, go to  
<http://www.champprogram.com/practice-recommendations.shtml>.



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