Checklist for Use in Suspected Cases of Physical Child Abuse
Adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice
Portable Guides to Investigating Child Abuse:
Recognizing When a Child’s Injury or Illness is Caused by Abuse
(June 1996)

☐ Have you asked about the child’s family history, substance abuse or other environmental factors in the home, and the parents’ marital status, employment history, or unrealistic expectations of the child?

☐ How could the child’s behavior or the caretaker’s stress have contributed to the crisis?

☐ Could the child do what the caretakers told you he or she did?

☐ Is the child a “target” child (a child perceived by the caretaker(s) as having negative characteristics), or are there target children present?

☐ Was there any delay in treatment or was hospital “shopping” involved?

☐ What are the locations, configurations, and distributions of the bruises, welts, lacerations, abrasions, or burns?

☐ Do the injuries appear to have been caused by the hands or an instrument? Can you determine what instrument might have been used?

☐ Are multiple injuries (in various stages of healing) present?

☐ Are the injuries in areas commonly targeted in abuse (the back, from the neck to the back of the knees including the shoulders and arms)?

☐ Can you determine the positions of the offender and the child during the attack?

☐ Is there any evidence of attempts to hold the child in a certain position or at a certain angle during the attack? Are there such control marks on the wrists, forearms, or biceps?

☐ Was a careful check made for injuries on the head, mouth, ears, and nose?