What is psychopathy?

Psychopathy is a common disorder that affects as many as 1 in 50 children and adolescents\(^1\). Affected children show limited prosocial emotions (low empathy, compassion, and remorse), a bold and daring personality, and difficulty inhibiting behaviors\(^2\). They may deceive, manipulate, exploit, threaten, or steal from others. Sometimes, but not always, they are physically violent. Psychopathy is a spectrum disorder that ranges from mild to extreme and results from atypical structure and function in the brain\(^3\).

I am concerned my child may be at risk for psychopathy because I have observed the following traits and/or behaviors in him/her:

- Unusual risk taking, shows little fear in dangerous situations, seems “cold” and does not show affection
- Misbehaves more than peers, including lying, stealing, breaking rules, and/or aggression
- Doesn’t seem to care about consequences like getting a time-out or having privileges removed
- Doesn’t feel bad or guilty after doing something wrong
- Doesn’t seem concerned about other people’s feelings
- Acts or feels superior to other people

I completed an online psychopathy screener (www.psychopathyis.org) and my child’s score is ____ which places him/her in the top ____% in his/her age category.

I would like a referral to a clinician who is knowledgeable about psychopathy and familiar with (or willing to learn more about) the most effective treatments for this disorder.

For more information: