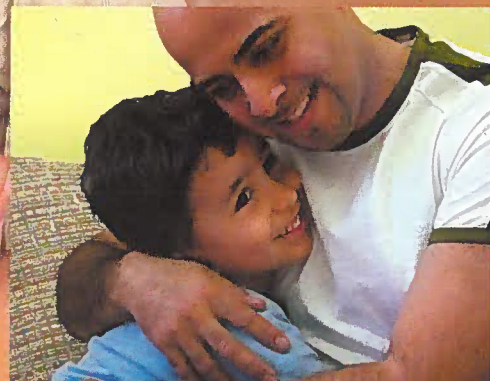
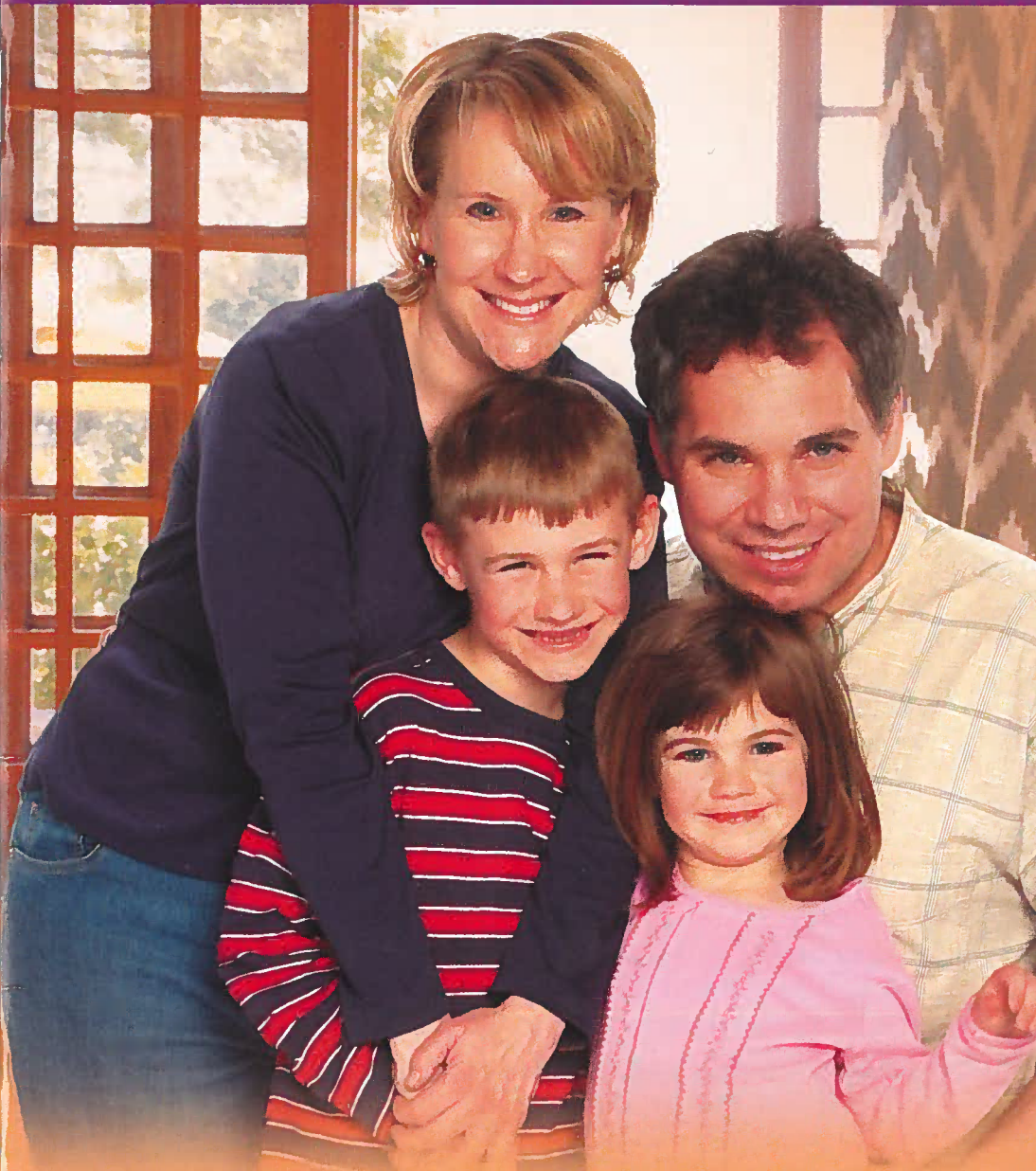


Understanding and helping to prevent **Child Sexual Abuse**





You might find it helpful to keep important information handy.

Write it below.

My child's primary health-care provider

Name _____

Phone number _____

Other health-care providers

Name _____

Phone number _____

Name _____

Phone number _____

Health plan

Plan name _____

Phone number _____

Local law enforcement

Name _____

Phone number _____

An emergency contact

Name _____

Phone number _____

Other important numbers

Please read:

Talk to a professional! This handbook is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified expert or any state laws on child abuse.

The photos in this handbook are of models. The models have no relation to the issues presented.
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If you want to help prevent child sexual abuse,

this handbook is for you.

Many children are sexually abused every year in the U.S.

Children who are abused can suffer for life.

But there are ways to help prevent child sexual abuse.

Every member of the community can do something to help stop current abuse—and prevent abuse in the future.

Helping prevent child sexual abuse is every adult’s responsibility. Learn how you can do your part.

In this handbook, “parent” also refers to guardians, grandparents and other primary caregivers.

What is child sexual abuse?

It's sexual activity between an adult and a child.*
Sexual abuse can be:



Physical

For example:

- fondling a child or touching a child in a sexual way
- making a child touch an adult's or other child's sexual organs
- oral contact with genitals involving a child and an adult or older child
- penetration, attempted penetration or any genital-to-genital contact.

Nonphysical

For example:

- indecent exposure (for example, displaying genitals)
- talking to a child about sex for inappropriate reasons, or telling sexual stories
- making obscene phone calls to a child
- sending sexually oriented e-mail or text messages to a child
- allowing a child to watch or hear sexual acts or materials
- showing a child pornography or other inappropriate sexual material.

Exploitive

For example:

- child pornography—photographs, films, videotapes, Internet sites or live performances of children in sexual activities or poses
- child trafficking for sex—when children are used by adults for sexual services (adults may pay money or provide a child with shelter, food or drugs)
- sex rings—when one or more adults sexually abuse children in small groups
- Internet exploitation—when an adult uses e-mail or Web sites to find children to sexually abuse.

*Note: A child may be sexually abused by another child, too.

Legal definitions of child sexual abuse vary by state.



Child sexual abuse affects everyone.

For example:



Children

Victims of sexual abuse may be girls or boys of any age. The abuse can cause serious and long-lasting harm. Children may suffer:

- physically
- psychologically
- socially.

See pages 6-7 for more information about these effects.

Parents

Learning that a child has been sexually abused can be devastating. Parents may feel:

- guilty (they may blame themselves for not protecting their child)
- angry (in some cases, they may try to “take the law into their own hands” in order to punish the person who abused their child—but violence is never the answer).

Family and friends

Learning that a child has been sexually abused can be very painful. Family and friends may blame the parents, or be afraid to interact with the child.

If a friend or family member is involved in the abuse, he or she may try to cover up the problem or deny the abuse happened. If you take legal action, other friends and family may get angry.

These and other situations can damage or destroy relationships.

Schools

Children who are victims of abuse may have trouble concentrating and have other challenges, such as frequent absences or acting out. They may require extra attention and resources.

School staff can learn more about signs of abuse, reporting and how to help prevent abuse. See pages 26-27 for more on what schools can do to help.

The community

Sexual abuse can lead to violence, alcoholism—and more abuse. These problems affect everyone in a community. Communities that support families can help break the cycle. See pages 28-29 for more information.

**We can all work to help prevent abuse!
Each of us has a role to play.**





Child abuse has short-term and long-term effects.

It can cause:

Low self-esteem

Children who are abused may believe that they are worthless or bad in some way. They may feel that they are unlovable. This can cause problems in school, at work (later in life), and in their personal relationships.

Problems with feelings

A child may remain afraid to show his or her feelings for many years. Many victims suffer from lasting guilt and shame, even though abuse is never the victim's fault.

Other psychological harm

Victims of abuse may suffer from:

- nightmares
- trouble sleeping
- anxiety
- depression
- eating disorders.

These may last into adulthood.

Self-destructive behavior

Victims of abuse may turn to inappropriate or dangerous sexual conduct, or use of alcohol or other drugs. They may also engage in self-mutilation (by cutting themselves, for example).

Behavior problems

These might include:

- aggressive behavior
- showing advanced sexual awareness through talk or behavior
- acting out sexually
- withdrawal
- running away.

Physical harm

- Children may suffer serious injuries to their bodies, especially to their genital areas. These injuries may result in painful urination and other problems, such as stomachaches.
- Some children may become infected with STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).
- Girls who are going through or have gone through puberty may become pregnant.



Sexual problems

Victims may develop unhealthy attitudes toward sex as they mature.

Relationship problems

Victims of abuse may have trouble trusting others. As a result, they may have problems with friendships and intimate relationships as adults.

Doing poorly in school

Dealing with the physical and emotional effects of sexual abuse can make concentrating on schoolwork difficult. Children may also “give up” on themselves and school.

Violence and crime

Children who are abused may believe that violence is the way to solve problems. They are more likely to turn to violence and crime as they get older—and they may abuse children themselves.

Suicide

In some cases, victims feel so hopeless or helpless, they take their own lives. If a child talks of suicide, get help. It is an emergency! Call 9-1-1, your local medical emergency number or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK right away.

But there are many ways to help protect children! Learn what you can do.



Helping prevent abuse is a responsibility all adults share.

It takes efforts by:



Parents

It's important to learn all you can about child sexual abuse and how to help prevent it. You can:

- learn about adult behaviors to be alert for, and report anything suspicious
- teach your child about the dangers of child abuse—and how to stay safer
- find out what programs and policies are in place to help prevent child sexual abuse at your child's school or child-care center
- learn more about the people involved in your child's life, including teachers, coaches, baby sitters and caregivers
- learn about signs of abuse.

See pages 18-25 for more tips on how to help protect your child.

Teachers and other school staff

They should be trained to know:

- signs of abuse
- signs that someone may be abusive
- how to respond to a child who tells of sexual abuse
- how to report suspected abuse
- appropriate staff conduct (for example, no "dating" an older student).

Teachers are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse. See pages 26-27 for more on how schools can make a difference.

Others who work with youth

Any organization or program that involves youth should be aware of child sexual abuse—and work to help prevent it. Examples include:

- child-care centers
- recreational sports programs
- camps and other recreational activities
- religious programs.

These organizations should:

- carefully screen all potential staff, volunteers and visitors
- conduct criminal background checks of staff and volunteers, if allowed by law
- be aware of—and watch for—signs of abuse or of someone who may abuse
- have appropriate rules and policies for all relationships and interactions
- have clear policies for responding to a child's disclosure of abuse and reporting any suspected abuse
- make sure buildings and grounds are secure.

Every member of the community can make a difference.



Laws also help protect children.

Child sexual abuse is against the law.



Laws against abuse

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws against sexual abuse. Most states define a child as anyone under 18 years of age. Some include an age difference between the person who commits abuse and the victim.

Reporting laws

All states and the District of Columbia have laws about who must report suspected abuse. Most laws list certain people who work with children (such as teachers, nurses, social workers and doctors). Other laws say anyone must report suspected abuse. Learn more at www.childwelfare.gov—search for “mandatory reporters.”

Learn what types of interactions are OK.

Verbal

Healthy, nonsexual and nonthreatening interaction with children is important.

Healthy verbal interaction for people who work with children includes:

- praise
- positive reinforcement for good work and behavior.

Inappropriate interaction includes:

- sexual comments
- jokes with sexual content.

Physical

Healthy physical contact can help children feel loved, safe and secure.

Appropriate physical interaction for people who work with children includes:

- high-fives
- pats on the back or shoulder.

Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- patting the buttocks
- intimate or sexual contact, such as kissing or fondling.

Questions I have about laws in my state:

See page 30 for places to contact to learn more about child sexual abuse.

Who abuses children?



Often, the person is someone the child knows, such as:

A family member

For example, it could be:

- a parent, stepparent or partner of a parent
- a grandparent
- an aunt or uncle
- a brother, sister or cousin.

A family friend or neighbor

For example, it could be someone who visits the home often.

Someone who has frequent access to the child

For example, it could be a:

- teacher, coach or youth leader
- religious leader
- caregiver or health-care provider.

Some abusers identify certain children or families as vulnerable and work to gain access and trust within the family.

People who abuse children may have:

A history of childhood abuse

Some people who abuse children were abused or witnessed abuse as children. The pattern of abuse can be passed from one generation to the next.

Emotional problems

People with low self-esteem or a need to control may sexually abuse a child in order to feel powerful. People with sexual problems may turn to children to meet their supposed needs.

A problem with alcohol or other drugs

Alcohol or other drugs harm a person's ability to act as a responsible, caring person.

No matter what kind of problems a person has, there is no excuse for sexual abuse.

Child abuse knows no boundaries.

A person who abuses may be:

- male or female—most are men, but women may abuse children as well
- young or old—people who abuse come from all age groups (some may not be much older than the victim)
- of any race or income level—abuse is a problem throughout society, no matter the person's skin color or wealth
- from the city, suburbs or country—people who abuse come from every kind of community.

Are there signs that someone is sexually abusive?

Not always, but a person abusing a child may:



Seek the company and friendship of children

For example, a teen or adult who likes to “hang out” with a young child may pose a risk. The person may frequently offer to “play games” with the child, which may eventually result in sexual abuse.

People who commit abuse may also seem awkward or uncomfortable around people their age while talking to children.

Touch children in inappropriate ways

In general, the physical contact becomes more sexual over time. For example, it may include:

- long hugs
- back rubs
- kissing on the lips
- having a child sit on one’s lap for long periods of time.

What is appropriate and inappropriate can vary from culture to culture. However, any type of touch that makes a child feel uncomfortable is not appropriate.

Trick or bribe the child

For example, the person may pressure the child to go along with his or her wishes by:

- lavishing attention on the child
- promising the child favors or gifts
- convincing the child they are playing “a game.”

Act like the child’s parent

The person may form a strong and complex bond with the child. He or she may act like the child’s parent or another authority figure.

The person may also use force, threats or his or her power of authority to intimidate the child. This can create enough fear that the child is scared into going along with what the person tells him or her to do.

Myths

It is NOT true that most sexual predators:

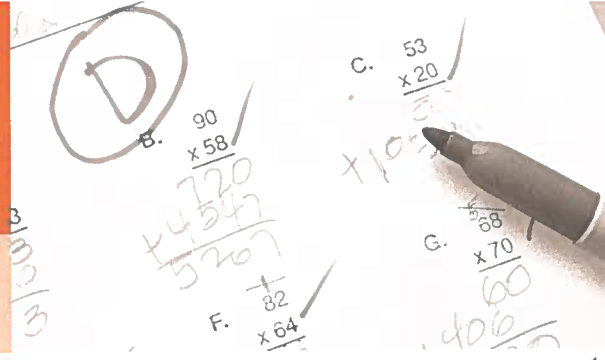
- lurk in alleys, parks or schoolyards
- are homosexual
- are from “lower-class” backgrounds
- are mentally disabled.

In most cases, people who commit child sexual abuse are people the child knows.

None of these signs necessarily means a person is or will be sexually abusive. But it pays to be cautious and to look into the situation further.

Signs of child abuse*

A child doesn't always show signs of abuse. But there are some common signs to be alert for.



Behavioral signs

Having certain fears

For example, the child may fear certain places, people or activities.

Shame about one's body

The child may seem overly modest, for example.

Trouble sleeping

The child may have:

- nightmares
- fear of the dark
- disturbed sleep patterns.

Doing poorly in school

For example, the child may be absent often and/or his or her grades may drop.

A change in eating habits

The child may begin to overeat, or stop eating.

Emotional problems

The child may seem:

- depressed
- anxious or fearful
- angry or moody.

Loss of self-respect

Victims of abuse often have low self-esteem. In some cases, they come to believe they deserve to be mistreated.

Withdrawal from friends and family

The child may act aggressively toward others or avoid being with other people. In some cases, the child may try to run away in order to escape abuse or shame.

Acting younger than his or her age

For example, the child may:

- start wetting the bed
- suck his or her thumb
- seem overly clingy or cry more frequently.

Being self-destructive

For example, the child may practice self-mutilation (cutting, hair pulling) or other harmful behavior to him- or herself.

Acting out sexually

The child may show knowledge or interest in sex that is not appropriate for his or her age.

Alcohol and other drug use

Children—even younger ones—may seek a way to try to “escape” the pain.

*Note: The signs listed on pages 12-13 may indicate problems other than abuse.





Physical signs

Injury to the genital area

This includes:

- bleeding, bruising, swelling or irritation
- stained or torn underwear
- trouble walking, especially if the child is young.

Urinary or bowel problems

This is more common in young children who are abused. They may have difficulty having bowel movements or urinating.

Frequent headaches or stomachaches

Vomiting and difficulty swallowing may also be signs.

Pregnancy

Girls who are sexually abused are at risk of pregnancy at a young age. This can be dangerous to the girl, as well as the unborn baby.

STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)

Some children who are infected with STDs may not have symptoms. If you think a child may be infected, ask a health-care provider about getting the child tested.

Children who are sexually abused may hide their pain.

They often keep silent about the abuse because:

- the person who abused them says what they did was a “secret”
- the person who abused them threatened to harm them or a loved one if they tell
- they are afraid of the person who abused them
- they still love the person who abused them and do not want to cause trouble or disrupt their household
- they do not think anyone will believe them
- they think they did something wrong.

By talking with children about the dangers of abuse now, you build lines of communication that may help them talk about any fears—or worse—that they may encounter later.

These are signs that something is wrong, even if it is not abuse. Do not ignore them. Take action.



What to do if a child tells you about abuse

Listen. Then, take action! Whether the child is your own or another child you know:



Make sure the child is safe.

If you are worried about a child's immediate safety (or if the child is afraid to go home), call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.

Listen.

Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. Encourage him or her to talk freely, but don't pressure the child. Ask open-ended questions ("What happened?") rather than leading ones ("When did he hurt you?").

Show the child understanding.

Tell the child he or she did the right thing by coming to you.

Control your emotions.

- Don't act shocked—instead, try to be calm and reassuring. Fear and anger are normal reactions, but they can scare the child.
- Do not speak negatively about the person suspected of the abuse. The child may still feel love toward this person.
- Be sure not to blame, punish or embarrass the child. Abuse is never the child's fault.

Believe the child.

Take the child seriously. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing. For example, say, "I am sorry that happened to you. I am glad you told me."

Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. Make sure the child knows you believe him or her.

Be supportive.

Reassure the child that he or she did nothing wrong. Explain that you will help keep him or her safe, and that reporting the incident is the right thing to do.

Be honest.

Don't promise to keep what the child told you a secret. Let the child know that in order to help, you will have to tell another trusted adult who wants to help the child, too.

Respect the child.

While you need to report the incident, don't tell anyone about the abuse who doesn't need to know.



Help the child know what to expect.

Tell him or her what you will do to try to help. You might say, "I want to try to help you. A social worker is coming to talk with you. She wants to help you, too."

Get medical help for the child.

He or she may need treatment for physical injuries. Ask the child's health-care provider to refer you to a counselor experienced in handling child sexual abuse. Seek help, even if the child seems unhurt.

If a child tells you about sexual abuse right after it happens, do not bathe the child or change his or her clothes because it may destroy important evidence. Get medical help for the child right away.

Report the abuse.

Contact:

- your local department of social services or child protective services
- the Childhelp® National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
- the police.

Ask these resources about finding psychological and emotional help for the victim and family, too.

See page 16 for more on reporting.



What if the person who commits abuse is a relative?

- Be understanding of your child's feelings. He or she may have mixed feelings of love, anger, hurt and betrayal.
- Help protect the child. Help keep the child away from the person suspected of abusing him or her.
- Allow the child to express his or her feelings. Be sure to keep your personal feelings about the person who committed the abuse separate.
- Reassure the child. He or she may feel responsible for breaking up the family, for example. Reassure the child often that he or she is not to blame.
- Report the abuse and get the child immediate help from a health-care provider.

How to report abuse

If you think your child or a child you know has been abused, report it right away. Contact your local child protective services agency or law enforcement agency. Provide as much information as you can about:



The child

Provide the child's:

- name (if you don't know the child's name, give a description of the child)
- age (if unknown, give an approximate age)
- address (or where the child can be found).

The person suspected of abuse

If known, include the person's:

- name
- relationship to the child, such as parent, neighbor or baby sitter

Give a description of the person if you do not know his or her name. If possible, get the person's license plate number.

A description of the abuse

Include:

- a description of the suspected abuse and when it occurred
- any concerns for the child's immediate safety.

Your knowledge of past abuse

If you know about or suspect any past abuse, include a description.

Other witnesses

If known, provide names of other people who may have witnessed the abuse.

Your relationship to the child

For example, tell whether you are:

- the child's parent
- a family friend
- the child's teacher
- a neighbor.

Never assume someone else will report the abuse.

Know the law in your state. Remember, you may be required to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Also remember—reporting it is the right thing to do, even if you are not legally required to do so.

Education can help protect children from sexual abuse.

All children should know:



No one has a right to touch them

Explain to your child that nobody (including a parent or another relative) should touch him or her in a way that makes him or her feel uncomfortable, nervous or confused.

Teach about private body parts and the proper names for them.

The difference between a safe touch and an unsafe touch

For example, a safe touch could be a pat on the back or a high-five. An unsafe touch could be fondling or touching in any way that feels uncomfortable (such as being forced to sit on someone's lap or hug or kiss someone). Any touch that he or she is told is "secret" is unsafe, too. Review page 9 for examples.

That it's always OK to say no

Tell your child to say no if someone tries to touch him or her or makes him or her feel uncomfortable. Help your child practice using a strong, forceful voice.

What to do if someone makes them uncomfortable or afraid

For example, teach your child to:

- say no (see below)
- walk away
- yell for help (see page 20)
- tell someone (see below).

You may also want to teach your child how to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency services number.

That they'll be believed

It's important to create a strong, trusting relationship. Your child needs to know that you will always believe him or her, no matter what.

To not keep "secrets"

Tell your child that there is no secret he or she can't tell you, even if someone—including an adult—said not to tell. Reassure your child that you will always love him or her no matter what.

Rules for getting parents' permission to go anywhere with another adult

Make sure your child ALWAYS tells you:

- where he or she will be
- who he or she will be with (be sure to check with other parents to make sure there is adult supervision)
- when he or she will be home (offer a ride if your child needs one).

Your child should never go anywhere with another adult or child without asking you first.

To tell a trusted adult if someone tries to hurt them

Children should know that it is important to tell a:

- parent or relative
- teacher
- health-care provider
- religious leader.

They should keep telling until someone helps them.





Their full name, address and phone number

Help your child memorize this information. It's best not to have your child wear clothing or carry items with his or her name on them. This can invite attention from people looking for ways to start a conversation with your child.

Rules for not talking to people they don't know well

For example, teach your child not to talk to people he or she does not know well when you are not there.

To never agree to meet with someone they don't know well

See page 25 for Internet safety tips.

Safety rules when home alone*

For example, teach your child to:

- never open the door when home alone
- avoid letting people know he or she is home alone when answering the phone. Teach your child to say, "My parent can't come to the phone right now" rather than "My parent isn't home right now."

*Do not leave a child home alone unless he or she is old enough to easily understand and follow your instructions.

Talk openly with your child.

Teach your child about sexuality in a way that is appropriate for his or her age. Try to answer questions in an honest way. Teach your child to use proper names for private body parts. If you feel uncomfortable talking about sex with your child, ask his or her health-care provider for advice.



Teach children what to do if they're approached.

Make sure they know:



What to do if a person they don't know well tries to talk to them

Teach your child to get away from anyone he or she doesn't know who may pose a threat—for example, someone who tries to lure him or her with gifts or a ride.

Tell your child to walk or run away and find you or another trusted adult, such as a police officer or security guard.

How to run and yell for help

Help your child practice getting out of your grasp and yelling for help. (But be careful not to hurt one another.) Teach your child to scream “no” or “I don't know you” or “don't touch me” as loud as he or she can.

The importance of reporting any inappropriate behavior

Remind your child to tell a trusted adult right away if a person does anything that makes him or her feel uncomfortable or scared.

What to do in an emergency

In addition to helping your child memorize his or her phone number and address, help him or her learn the name, number and address of an emergency contact person.

Every so often, ask your child this information to make sure he or she remembers it.

Where to place blame

Remind your child that if abuse happens, it is never the child's fault.

Note: In some cases, a child may not seem upset or hurt by what happened. But remember, abuse is always harmful.

Parent for prevention.

Parents are responsible for doing all they can to keep their children from being in situations that make them vulnerable. People who abuse will target children who they think are not well protected.

As a parent, you should:

- Be aware that people who abuse are most often someone the child knows well.
- Understand that people who abuse often attempt to gain a child's and family's trust over a period of time before abuse begins.
- Check with other families about adults who may work with your child (see page 22).
- Drop in without prior notice (at school, practice, your child's friend's house, etc.) to assess situations in which your child is with other adults.

See pages 22-23 for more ideas.



Create a safer environment for your child.

It's your responsibility to:



Know where your child is—and who he or she is with—at all times.

Also, get to know the parents of your child's friends and exchange contact information. Before your child spends time at a friend's house, talk to the friend's parents. Find out what your child will be doing, if he or she will be going anywhere with the family and who will be there to supervise.

Remind your child about safety rules.

Go over the tips on pages 18-20. Be sure your child knows how to reach you at all times.

Know the people involved in your child's care.

Carefully screen care providers, tutors and anyone else you may hire to work with your child.

Ask your child about activities when he or she has been with baby sitters or other adults. Ask about what your child did, if they had fun and what they talked about.

Know the people involved in sports and activities your child participates in.

Talk with your child about any close relationships he or she forms with adults. Take time to get to know the people as well. If possible, see if you can volunteer or help in some way. Being involved in your child's activities helps him or her feel safe, loved and important. It also shows that you are a watchful parent.

Be alert for signs of trouble.

Listen to your child talk about caregivers, coaches and other adults he or she spends time with. If your child ever seems afraid or describes an unusually close relationship, learn more. Don't accuse your child of doing something wrong.

If something doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and take action.

Take part in prevention efforts.

Contact child abuse prevention programs in your community, and find out how you can support them.





Get involved in your child's school.

Join the parent-teacher organization and attend school events. Showing an interest in your child's school shows your child you care. It's also a way for you to be a presence at your child's school.

You can also find out what the school is doing to prevent violence and abuse in your community—and what you can do to help.

Support school safety efforts.

Voice your support and donate time or resources to programs that:

- teach children how to protect themselves
- provide before- and after-school activities to help keep children safe
- promote sexual abuse awareness and prevention, such as information sessions for parents and children.

Ways I can be more involved at my child's school:

Examples:

- *volunteer in the classroom*
- *join a parent organization*
- *help with a fund-raiser*

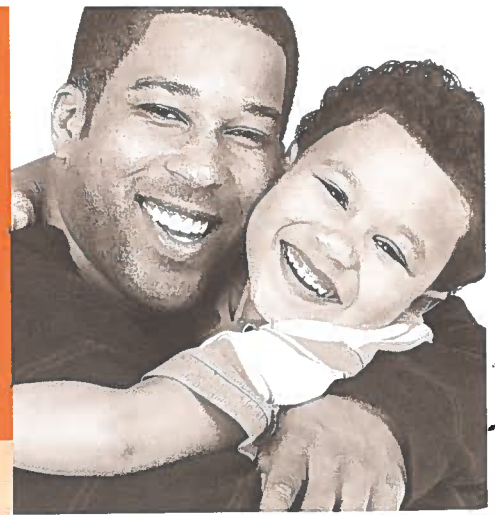
School efforts I might like to get involved in:

Examples:

- *help the parent-teacher organization sponsor a guest speaker to talk about personal safety*
- *attend meetings to discuss improving school safety*

Develop a strong, loving relationship with your child.

Make every effort to:



Help your child feel loved and secure.

Make sure your child knows you love him or her no matter what.

Help build your child's self-esteem.

Be encouraging, rather than critical. Praise your child's efforts and achievements. Let your child know how proud you are. When children have healthy respect for themselves, they are more likely to insist others respect them, too.

Take time each day to talk with your child.

If possible, eat at least one meal together each day. Ask your child about school, activities and friends. Remember, showing an interest shows you care about your child.

Spend quality time together.

Do things that you both enjoy. You can:

- read the same book (or read the book to your child) and discuss it
- watch a movie and talk about it together
- go for a walk
- play a board game.

Show an interest in your child's activities.

Attend games and other events your child is involved in.

It's never too late to build a healthy, loving relationship with your child.

Activities my child and I both enjoy:

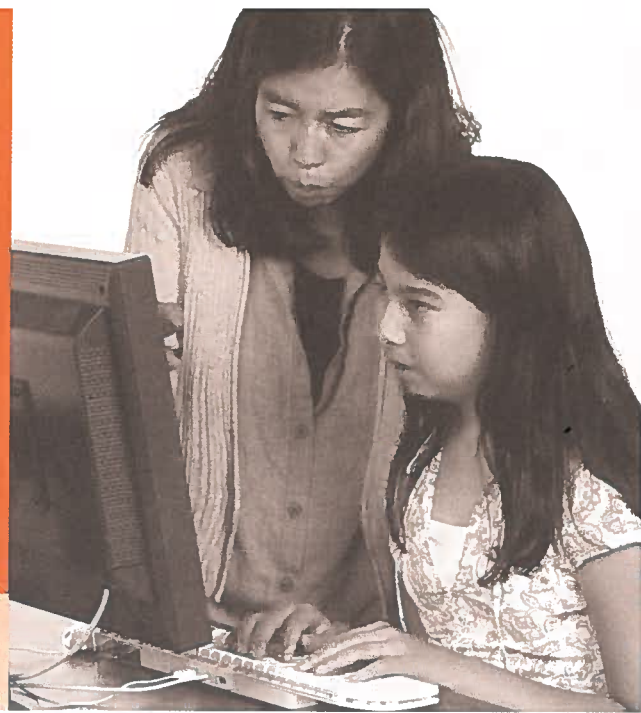
Changes we can make in our schedule in order to spend more time together:

Something special I want my child to know:



Internet safety

Sexual predators often use the Internet to attract children.



Help keep your child safe:

Explain the dangers.

Children may take their own safety more seriously when they know what the risks are.

Be there.

Keep the computer in a central location so you can see what your child is doing when online.

Limit your child's access.

Some children's Web sites and many online gaming devices are set up to have multiple players and interactive elements. Sexual predators can pose as children and try to develop friendships with children. Monitor your child's use. Parental control tools can help you limit access to games with inappropriate ratings and to monitor when and with whom your child is gaming. Consider having rules against your child visiting Web sites and using gaming devices that allow interaction with strangers.

Your child should know to:

Never give out personal information

This includes your child's or your:

- first or last name
- home or work address
- phone number
- school name or location
- photographs.

Never meet anyone in person whom he or she only knows online

Remember, people may not be who they claim to be.

Never respond to offensive messages

It can only make matters worse. Tell your child to let you know about any offensive or inappropriate messages (or online behavior). Assure your child he or she is not to blame.

Learn how predators use the Internet.

They may use e-mail, gaming devices or Web sites to find children to sexually abuse. They may pose as young people to develop a friendship, then try to arrange to meet with the child, or to get the child to share photos of him- or herself (for example, through a separate channel, such as a social media app).

Schools play a role in helping to prevent sexual abuse, too.

They can:



Educate teachers and other school staff

For example, they can set up training sessions that cover:

- signs of abuse
- signs that adults or older children may be abusive
- responding to a child who tells of sexual abuse
- reporting suspected abuse
- appropriate staff conduct (for example, appropriate rules for touching and talking to students).

Remember, all teachers are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse.

Develop programs for students

Students may be more likely to disclose abuse when a school-based program is in place. Effective programs help children:

- build self-confidence needed to help protect themselves
- understand that no one (including older peers, teachers and other adults) has a right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable
- recognize signs that someone may be sexually abusive
- know they can tell a school official about abuse, and that they will be helped.

Make the school environment safer

Schools should:

- carefully screen any potential staff member, volunteer or other person who may have access to schoolchildren (such as bus drivers)
- have security staff in place to screen visitors
- supervise students during activities—including computer use
- make sure school buildings and grounds are secure.



Steps my child's school is taking to help prevent child sexual abuse

(ask your school's principal or parent-teacher organization for information):

Involve parents

For example, schools can make an effort to:

- hold parenting classes or workshops (such as classes on strengthening a positive relationship with children, or how to talk with children about healthy sexual behavior and sexual abuse)
- encourage parents to attend school activities (remember, this can help parents increase their presence at the school, as well as help strengthen their relationship with their children)
- remind parents to use the library and other community resources with their children (this is a great way to spend time and learn together)
- send home written materials for parents with tips about preventing abuse and ways to talk with children
- encourage parents to talk to their children about sexual abuse.

Events I could attend at my child's school:

Date: _____

Description: _____

Date: _____

Description: _____

Date: _____

Description: _____

Classes and other programs my child's school offers:

Date: _____

Description: _____

Date: _____

Description: _____

Date: _____

Description: _____

Suggestions I have for my child's school:

ALL community members can help prevent child sexual abuse.

Community members can:



Get involved in the community.

- Attend town meetings and community events. Join groups that are working to improve your community.
- Establish relationships with neighbors, parents or your children's friends and others. Offer to help one another—especially in times of stress.

Support local programs for families.

Donate time or money, if you can. For example, you can help support:

- youth mentoring programs
- self-help groups and other programs for struggling parents
- organizations that help victims of abuse and their families
- accessible and affordable health care.

Help raise awareness.

For example, you can help to:

- Arrange and promote parenting classes on effective discipline.
- Invite a speaker, such as a child services professional—to talk to community members about preventing sexual abuse.

Join a coalition to prevent child abuse.

Find out about groups in your area. See page 30 for national sources of information.

Support community after-school and summer programs for children.

For example, programs at recreation centers, libraries and other community groups can give children a safe place to go to after school or during the summer.

Work with local law enforcement.

You can:

- Join (or help start) a neighborhood crime watch. Report any suspicious activity—even within a family.
- Ask law enforcement officials about community notification of sex offenders living in your area.

Understand reporting laws.

Remember, certain professionals are required to report suspected abuse.

Also remember—reporting it is the right thing to do, even if you are not legally required to do so.

Learn more.

You can learn more about preventing child sexual abuse from:



Childhelp® National Child Abuse Hotline

www.childhelp.org
1-800-4-A-CHILD
(1-800-422-4453)

Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA)

www.preventchildabuse.org
1-800-CHILDREN
(1-800-244-5373)

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

www.alliance1.org
1-800-221-3726

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

www.rainn.org
National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-HOPE
(1-800-656-4673)

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

www.missingkids.com
1-800-THE-LOST
(1-800-843-5678)

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov
1-800-394-3366

Stop It Now!®

www.stopitnow.org
1-888-PREVENT
1-888-773-8368.

You can also contact:

- your health-care provider
- your state's Prevent Child Abuse America chapter
- your local child advocacy center
- another social service agency in your area that deals with child abuse.



Protecting children from child sexual abuse is an adult responsibility.

Supervise your child

well, and make sure you evaluate closely all situations in which your child may spend time with other adults or older children.

Build a healthy, trusting relationship with your child

by spending quality time together.

Get involved

at your child's school and in your community. Support efforts to help spread awareness about child sexual abuse.

Learn all you can

about the signs of child sexual abuse—and how you can help keep your child safe.

Teach your child how to stay safe

by giving him or her the tools to make good decisions and to recognize signs of danger.

Together, we can help protect our children.

