

Protecting Children & Adolescents from Sexual Assault

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Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

- Sexual abuse happens to both boys and girls of all ages.
- One out of four children experience some kind of sexual abuse by age 18.
- Approximately 90% of offenders are someone the child knows and trusts.

Facts About Child Sexual Abuse

- Most incidents of child sexual abuse occur in secret; they are not isolated incidents that occur out of the blue.
- Sexual abuse is never the child's fault.

Signs of Emotional Upset

- Change in sleeping habits (more or less)
- Nightmares
- Develops new fears (afraid of dark, afraid of certain individual)

Signs of Emotional Upset

- Bedwetting or soiling self
- Becomes irritable or fussy; extreme moodiness
- Aggression or hyperactivity; quiet or withdrawn
- Regressive behavior

Signs of Physical Upset

- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Increase in physical complaints, especially stomach aches
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Difficulty swallowing
- Changes in appetite
- Torn, stained underclothing
- Discharge or signs of infection

Activities / Habits May Include

- Sexually explicit behavior, beyond age-appropriate level
- Knowledge and use of sexual language
- Self-destructive behavior
- Changes in peer relationships
- Problems in school

Handling Disclosures

- Believe the child.
- Do not display shock, anger, etc. in front of the child. Keep your emotions under control.
- Tell the child you are glad he/she told you about the abuse.
- Never promise to keep the abuse a secret, even if the child asks you to.

Handling Disclosures

- Tell the child you will get help for him/her.
- Assure the child that he/she has done nothing wrong.
- Respect the child's confidentiality and privacy.
- Seek support for yourself.

Don't Identify as Sexual Assault Because:

- They knew the person who hurt them
- No physical violence involved
- No penetration
- Penetration didn't involve a penis
- Sexual assault/rape didn't physically hurt

Don't Identify as Sexual Assault Because:

- Their body may have responded sexually to the assault
- May have agreed and wanted some sexual activity, but not as far as it went
- It didn't last long; over quickly
- Were forced to perform a sexual act on or touch the assailant

Challenges for Male Victims

- Physical response to an assault may be pronounced
- Societal views often penalize men for being victims
- Societal views say a male cannot be sexually assaulted by a female

Challenges for Male Victims

- Boys are often silent when they experience abuse/assault
- Boys may also have to deal with a homophobic response when they disclose

Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth

- Did assault occur during a first time same sex sexual experience?
- Where are they in their own coming out process?
- What kind of support system do they have?
- Are they “out” to their family and friends?

Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth

- Will disclosing the sexual assault also mean “coming out” to their family?
- For a transgender youth, how does an assault affect their gender identity?