

## Tips for Talking to Children About Child Sexual Abuse

This topic may be difficult to discuss with a child, but it is extremely important. Did you know that 1 of every 4 girls and 1 of every 6 boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of 18? Sexual abuse is use of a child for any form of sexual activity by an older child or an adult. This broad legal definition includes sexual touching, molestation, and sexual intercourse, and it also includes taking pornographic videos or pictures of a child, showing a child pornography, indecent exposure, or even using a computer to suggest sexual activity.

Most children who are abused are victimized by someone they know, trust and depend upon for care and nurturing. The abuser usually coerces the child to keep the activity a secret and makes the child feel to blame. Sexual abuse can cause emotional wounds that may affect the victim for a lifetime.

There are some things that you can do to reduce the risk of abuse for a child or to help a child who has been abused:

- ❖ Reinforce these messages with children:
  1. *You are valuable and are loved.*
  2. *You have a right to tell people NO when they do things that hurt you, scare you or just don't feel right, even if they are family members. Then get away from that person as soon as you can.*
  3. *If anyone is doing something that hurts or scares you, or makes you feel like there is something wrong, tell me right away. I will believe you and help you.*
- ❖ Watch how a child is treated by the people who are frequently around her/him. If anything makes you feel uncomfortable, stop it. Do not leave the child alone with that person. Help a child to refuse a touch, a kiss, tickling or any other behavior that is obviously unwanted.
- ❖ If you notice unexplained changes in behavior or suspect that a child is being abused, ask open questions like, has something happened that is bothering you? Can you tell me what happened? Who did that? Never suggest to your child what might have happened.

**Thank you for helping children to be safe!**



**24 Hour Hotline: 724-836-1122**

**Toll-free: 1-888-832-2272**

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