

Ask yourself the following questions about protecting your family and community.

- 1. True or False:** In the United States, one in every four girls under the age of eighteen as well as one in every six boys under the age of sixteen has been sexually abused.
- Do you think a sex offender could live in **YOUR** neighborhood?
- Do you believe your child is safe because there are no sex offenders listed on the sex offender registry from your neighborhood?
- Do you think you know what a sex offender looks like?
- Do you think a member of your family could be a sex offender?
- Do you think that someone you know (friend or family) would touch your child inappropriately?
- When do you think you would discuss a personal safety plan with your child?
- Do you think your child would tell you if they were being sexually abused?
- Do you know the symptoms of sexual abuse?
- Do you feel that talking to your child about sexual abuse is a family matter?

For Help Or To Learn More

Call the 24-hour, toll-free confidential hotline

888-999-5545 (English)
888-568-8332 (Español)

You will be connected to the sexual assault crisis center closest to you.

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers Provide:

- Certified sexual assault crisis counselors
- Bilingual staff (Spanish/English)
 - Short-term counseling
 - Medical accompaniment
 - Criminal justice advocacy
 - Support groups
- Educational programs for communities
- Information & referrals

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NOT WHERE I LIVE



Connecticut Sexual Assault
Crisis Services, Inc.
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www.connsacs.org

Increase your family's safety by learning the facts.

- 1. True.** Studies show that one in four girls will be sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen (Rape in America, 1992) and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of sixteen (Department of Justice, 1998). Between 54% and 62% of all sexual assault victims are under the age of eighteen (Rape in America, 1992).
- 2.** Sex offenders live **everywhere**. Sexual abuse crosses all barriers and is found in every community and at every income level.
- 3.** Commonly known as “Megan’s Law,” the sex offender registry in the State of Connecticut is a helpful tool in keeping communities safe. *However, it is important to know the limitations of this law.* The registry only holds the names of people who have been reported, caught and convicted of sexual assault and related crimes. Because the majority of sex offenders do not come to the attention of the criminal justice system, most people who commit sexual offenses will not be on the registry and may not be known as sex offenders. Please contact your local police department for more information.

If you find there is a convicted sex offender in your community, it is important not to panic.
- 4.** There is no typical sex offender. Many of us have a picture in our heads of what a sex offender looks and acts like. **GET RID OF IT.** Sex offenders are all ages, races, income categories and genders. Most look and act like any other person. In fact, offenders are often described as a “great person” prior to disclosure of sex offending behavior.
- 5.** Anyone, including a family member, can be a sex offender. Women as well as men can be sex offenders. When it is publicly revealed that a person they know has sexually abused a child, communities respond with shock and disbelief because they liked and trusted the person.
- 6.** Again, anyone can be a sex offender: neighbors, babysitters, teachers, coaches, clergy members, family friends and even a family member. Approximately 90% of child sexual abuse victims know the person who assaulted them (Rape in America, 1992).

You can contact Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services and arrange for a panel of experts to conduct a community meeting. You will learn facts about sex offenders as well as tools to help you speak with your child.
- 7.** It is important to talk to children about personal safety, in age appropriate language, as early as possible. Talking to young children about sexual abuse can be intimidating and embarrassing for parents. Many parents don’t want to discuss this topic because they don’t want to frighten their children and may be afraid of what their children may tell them. We teach our young children how to protect themselves from other danger, for example “stop, drop and roll” if they are in a fire. Teaching your child about inappropriate touching and sexual activity is equally important.
- 8.** Many children do not report sexual abuse. They are afraid because they think they will not be believed, the disclosure might break up their family or they were threatened by the offender. If no one ever talked to them about their bodies, a child may not understand what happened and may be unable to disclose. The offender may be the only person from whom they receive information about sexuality. Sex offenders prey on kids’ lack of information. The more a child knows about personal safety and that it is okay to tell, the better. **Knowledge is power.**
- 9.** Don’t be fooled into thinking that you would know if your child was abused. Children’s reactions to sexual abuse vary. There is no one way a child who has been sexually abused will look or act. Some children may withdraw, develop eating disorders and even wet the bed. Others try to be perfect, hoping if they are “good” the sexual abuse will end. **Talk to your child.** Encourage them to feel comfortable telling you if someone has been touching them. Give them the language to describe their private parts. **Be willing to hear them and believe what they are telling you.**
- 10.** It is important for parents to start talking about sexual abuse with their children at an early age and continue building on those lessons. You are not alone in this journey. Ask your family for support. In Connecticut, there are nine sexual assault crisis service centers that can help you. These centers have trained staff who are prepared to assist you in talking about sexual abuse with your kids. They have educational materials, including books and videos, which may be helpful to you. Community educators are available to present to your schools, churches, community centers or wherever you need them.