WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

• Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse, regardless of cultural background or income level.

• Children need to feel loved, valued and protected.

• Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well-being.

• Often, there are no physical signs of sexual abuse.

• Many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.

• The offender may have threatened to hurt a family member, or the child may feel that she/he is to blame for the abuse.

• It is important to show interest in your child’s activities. Let her/him know that you are available to talk and listen. Allow your child to share thoughts and feelings with you.

• The child is NEVER to blame for the abuse. Children cannot prevent abuse—only the offender can.

• Studies suggest that personal safety rules can be taught and understood by children age 3 and up.

• There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse. It is more common for children to deny that abuse has happened when it has.

FOR HELP OR TO LEARN MORE:

24-hour, Toll-free
Confidential Hotline
888-999-5545 (English)
888-568-8332 (Español)

You will be connected to the sexual assault crisis member program nearest you.

Each program provides:

• 24-hour crisis hotline

• Advocacy for children and non-abusing parent with police and court

• Short-term counseling

• Support groups

• Information & referral

All services are free and confidential

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

A guide for parents to raise safe, healthy children

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.
96 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
860-282-9881
www.connsacs.org
**Sexual Abuse Includes:**

- fondling or touching the child’s private parts or forcing the child to touch another’s private parts
- exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic materials
- having children perform in pornographic movies or pose for pornographic materials
- sexual intercourse

**Signs of Possible Abuse Include:**

- excessive clinging or crying
- sleep disturbances and/or nightmares
- fear of particular adults or places
- bedwetting
- problems with school (refusal to attend or a drop in grades)
- depression; withdrawal from family and friends
- alcohol or drug use
- change in eating habits
- frequent touching of private parts

**These signs are possible indicators and do not necessarily mean sexual abuse has occurred.**

**Promote Your Child’s Safety and Health**

**Facts:** Approximately 90% of child sexual abuse is committed by relatives, close family friends, or someone else the child knows and trusts. Almost 50% of child sexual abuse is committed by children/youth engaged in sexually harmful behaviors.

- Pay attention to the behavior of adults and older children around younger children.
- Trust your feelings.
- If a person’s behavior makes you feel uncomfortable, talk to that person.
- Be sure that person gets help if needed.

**Teach Your Child Early:**

- the difference between safe and unsafe touches; what is appropriate physical affection.
- the proper names for all private parts.
- their bodies belong to them; it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts and it is not okay for them to touch others’ private parts.
- it is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable--no matter who the person is.
- they should not keep secrets about touching--no matter what the person says.

**Teach By Consistent Example:**

- Use touch in appropriate, respectful ways with your child and others (i.e., no slapping, pushing, punching, etc.). Expect the same from your child and the other people in your life.
- Speak openly and matter-of-factly about the human body and human development. Call private parts by their proper names.
- Respect your child’s right to refuse to give or receive a kiss or hug to/from a family member or friend; do not use coercion, disappointment, or other tactics to change the child’s mind.
- Listen to your child’s concerns and respond in supportive ways.