

# Child Abuse

A Parent's Guide...LISD Guidance & Counseling

## What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse happens when a child is tricked, forced, or manipulated in sexual contact. This includes phone and internet contact with obscene, sexual content, fondling, intercourse, oral/genital contact, prostitution, and pornography.

## Facts and statistics...

As many as forty million Americans, one in six people have experienced sexual victimization as children. The vast majority of sexual abuse incidents are never reported to the authorities making it the most under-reported crimes against children.

The reality is that your child is most at risk for sexual abuse from someone he or she knows – a relative, family friend, neighbor or trusted adult. Ninety-three percent of juvenile sexual assault victims know their attacker\*. The offender rarely has to use force because he or she is usually known and trusted by the child. The offender uses that trust to trick or manipulate the child into compliance.

Source: *National Center for Victims of Crime, victimsocrime.org*

## Symptoms...

There are often no obvious physical signs of child sexual abuse. However, there are some symptoms that could indicate that a child has been a victim of sexual abuse. The child may be extremely withdrawn, fearful of adults and/or exhibit very confusing behaviors.

### **Behavioral**

- Unusual interest in (or fear of) all things of a sexual nature
- Seductive or promiscuous behavior
- Sexual acting out
- Change in eating or sleeping habits
- Change in school performance/behavior

### **Emotional**

- Significant personality change
- Anger, hostility, aggressiveness
- Depression, crying episodes
- Suicidal, talks of death and dying

### **Physical**

- Discomfort or pain in genital area
- Urinary infections
- Vaginal, rectal, penile discharge, or bleeding
- Unusual/offensive odors

## Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)

Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb)

Child Welfare Information Gateway  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

FRIENDS National Resource Center  
[www.friendsnrc.org](http://www.friendsnrc.org)

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child  
[www.developingchild.net](http://www.developingchild.net)

# What to say and do if you suspect a child has been abused...

The reaction of the person a child tells is an important factor in their recovery. Calm support can significantly reduce the trauma of sexual abuse for a child.

- **BELIEVE**  
Believe the child. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse
- **AFFIRM**  
Commend the child for telling you about the event
- **SUPPORT**  
Guilt and self-blame usually contribute to the problem. Reassure the child that it is not his/her fault, regardless of the circumstances
- **EMPOWER**  
Let the child know you will help. Give him/her the “NO, GO, TELL” rules if the abuse should happen again.
- **REFER**  
In Texas, all suspected cases of abuse must be reported to Children’s Protective Services (CPS) or the local police. The numbers below are a starting point.

If you have ANY questions on how to talk to your child about sexual abuse, please feel free to ask your physician, police, school nurse or counselor. Keeping this information to yourself allows the perpetrator to continue to abuse other children.

## Prevention tips...

Education is the best way to prevent your child from becoming a victim. Teaching your child not to “talk to strangers” is simply not adequate. In addition to the fact that most children are molested by someone known to them, children are also susceptible to clever lures developed by intelligent offenders who understand a child’s thinking. Children should be educated to recognize these lures:

- The offering of gifts, candy, money, bribes
- Appealing to the child’s sense of helpfulness such as asking for assistance in finding a lost dog
- Offering a ride on a motorcycle, or sports car
- Telling the children that their parents sent to pick them up
- Telling them their parents were hurt in an accident and the hospital sent them to pick the children Up

Parents should also teach their children about their bodies and about appropriate and inappropriate touching

1. Teach your child that his/her body belongs to them and they have the right to say NO to anyone who touches them.
2. Tell your child that you want them to come to you if anything happens that makes them feel uncomfortable and that you won’t be angry no matter what happened (even if they got into trouble because they broke a rule).
3. Do not teach your child “blind obedience to adults - teacher, babysitter, etc. if they ask them to do something they know or think is wrong.
4. Teach your child the correct names of their body parts. Teach them that they don’t have to be embarrassed to talk to you about their private areas.

### Teach Your Child the NO! GO! TELL! RULE



NO!

- Say NO if someone makes you feel uncomfortable, scared, or touches you in a way you don't like



GO!

- Do your best to GO away from the stranger or person



TELL!

- TELL your parent or an adult you trust about what happened right away

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