



Preventing Child Abuse

Societal Costs of Child Abuse

Each year in the United States, close to one million children are confirmed victims of child maltreatment.

Annually, the United States spends:

- \$103.8 billion in response to child abuse.
- More than \$33.1 billion on the direct effects of child abuse.
- More than \$70.7 billion in treating all the long-term, indirect effects of child abuse, such as special education, mental and physical healthcare, and adult criminality.

Long-term effects:

Costs associated with the lost productivity to society from adult survivors of child abuse are estimated at \$33 billion annually.

Estimated 13% of all adult violence can be linked to earlier child maltreatment.

Responding to adults who, because of earlier abuse become involved in criminal activity, costs over \$27.9 billion annually.

The national average is \$7 saved by every dollar spent on prevention.

The cost of child abuse – whether defined in term of tax dollars or human suffering, highlights a clear need for society to give priority to child abuse prevention efforts.

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual activity with a girl or boy by an adult, an adolescent, or another child.

Non-touching sexual abuse behaviors may include:

- Showing pornography to a child.
- Exposing a person's genitals to a child ("exhibition").
- Photographing a child in sexual poses.
- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts either in person or on video.
- Watching a child undress or use the bathroom.



Touching sexual abuse behaviors may include:

- Touching a child's genitals.
- Making a child touch someone else's genitals, or playing sexual games.
- Putting objects or body parts inside the mouth or genitals of a child.

What are the signs of sexual abuse?

Behavioral Signs

- Fear of certain people or places.
- Sleeping problems: nightmares, bedwetting, fear of going to sleep.
- Behaviors that are unusual for a child's age: using older people's words to describe body parts, simulating sexual acts with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually.
- An older child may suddenly behave like a younger child (e.g., bedwetting, thumb-sucking).

Physical Signs

- Unexplained bruises, redness, or bleeding of a child's genitals, anus or mouth.
- Pain at the genitals, anus, or mouth.
- Genital sores or milky fluids in the genital area.

How can child sexual abuse be prevented?

Teach children the proper names of body parts and give them developmentally and age-appropriate sexual information. This knowledge gives children the correct language for asking questions that need to be asked and for telling about sexual abuse.

Teach children the difference between OK touch and touch that is not OK. Teach them to talk to you if anyone touches their private parts – family member, friend or anyone else. Also, teach them that it is not OK to try to touch or control someone else's body.

Teach children that secrets about touching are not OK. If someone touches their body and asks them to keep it a secret, they need to tell you about what happened.

Show in your life how to say "no" and how to respect another person's "no." Teach children that their "no" will be respected whether it's in playing, tickling, hugging or kissing. If your child does not want to give Grandpa a kiss, allow the child to shake hands instead. If others do not respect a child saying "no" to an activity or a touch, teach him or her to talk with you about these situations.

Report to the authorities (police, school, doctor) anything you know or suspect is sexual abuse. Abusers count on us to be confused, to keep quiet, and not to call for help.