

Respond to Abuse

If your children feel uncomfortable with anyone, they should come to you, the parent!

1 Investigate all credible allegations, even if levied against someone you know and trust.

2 If you think you see clear evidence of abuse, do not panic. The child is safe with you. Ask your family physician or other treatment provider to examine the child before you jump to conclusions. But by all means, do follow up on your concerns.

3 A false report to your family physician, police, or to a therapist or counselor, could be devastating to your family. DO treat your child's feelings seriously, and reassure the child he/she will be listened to. DO go on high alert.

4 If you discover teenage consensual sex, children engaging in sexual play, "sexting," or other non-violent, non-abusive sexual acts, consider addressing this inappropriate behavior as parents. Reporting to law enforcement may cause more harm than good.

5 Family re-unification is possible as a part of the healing process. Encourage the use of restorative justice.

6 Therapy is important to both offender and victim as a means of preventing further sexual abuse.

SOSEN Believes:

Sexual abuse is never acceptable. Perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions, and be punished to an extent that is appropriate to the offense.

We believe sexual offending is a public health issue, and that treatment and education are keys to the reduction of recidivism.

The dehumanization of victims and offenders through misrepresentation and excessive punishment of former offenders must be stopped. Public policy must take into account the best scientific research, as well as the needs of both the victim and the offender.

Further resources:

Stopitnow.org
SOSEN.org
Freerangekids.com
National Hotlines
1-800-656-HOPE
1-888-PREVENT

Sources

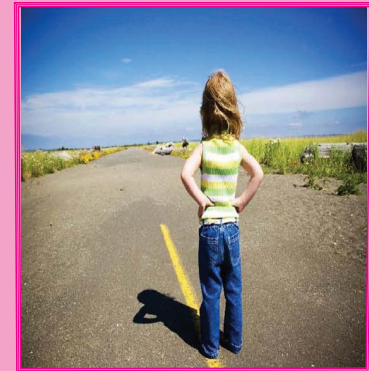
Endrass, Urbianek, et. al. "The consumption of Internet child pornography and violent and sex offending." BMC Psychiatry, 2009, 9:43. www.biomed-central.com/1471-244X/9/43

Characteristics and Behavioral Indicators of Adults Who Molest Children. Minnesota Department of Corrections, June 2009. <http://www.corr.state.mn.us/>

USDOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003.

Child Sex Abuse Prevention

The 3 R's for Parents



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Recognize & Prevent Abuse

- 1 Talk with your children and maintain open lines of communication. Make sure they feel comfortable speaking with you about any issue.
- 2 Make sure your children understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable physical touching and begin teaching boundaries at age two.
- 3 Consider a child's age in determining what normal children their age know about sex. A child that seems to display, or act out far beyond their years might possibly be a victim of abuse.
- 4 Discuss good secrets, and bad secrets that should not be kept.
- 5 Monitor internet use. Adults rarely abduct children through the internet, but there are many other serious issues such as inappropriate pictures or young teens soliciting each other for sex.
- 6 Teach your children that their bodies are their own and how to say no to anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- 7 Teach your children to say no, to tell an adult, and continue to tell, until someone listens and the abuse stops.
- 8 Symptoms of abuse may include: New fears of persons or places, sexual play beyond their years, sleeping problems or nightmares, depression or withdrawal, fear that something is wrong with their genital area, school refusal or avoidance, unusual aggressiveness, suicidal behavior, or other severe behavior changes.

9. Create a family safety plan, including educating everyone on boundaries, normal sexual development, signs of abuse and how to talk about sexual issues with trusted adults.
10. Watch for older adults who are consumed with spending excessive amounts of time with children and teens, to the point of excluding others in their own age group. Advise your children to be wary of spending time alone with such a person. There is safety in numbers.

Remove Barriers to Prevention

- 1 Support reform of the sex offender registry. The registry represents a wide range of sex offenses. This creates a false sense of security and distracts from real threats. Former sex offenders have extremely low recidivism rates of 3.5-5% (1995 DOJ Study), and are significantly lower with proven treatment methods. Recent studies indicate the registry provides NO prevention or public safety benefits.
- 2 Ask lawmakers to discontinue the focus on "retributive justice" against former sex offenders, and instead focus resources on practical solutions to sexual abuse, such as first responder training, prevention education, and therapy resources for both offender and victim.
- 3 Don't just teach about strangers! Our current focus on "stranger danger" fuels the myth that most sex crimes are committed by strangers lurking near playgrounds. In fact, only about 100 non-custodial child abductions occur a year. Approximately 95% of all sex crimes are committed by a new offender, which the child knows.

4. Watch for the warning signs of abuse, and treat them seriously. Don't ignore inappropriate behaviors.
5. Move cautiously if you suspect abuse. False accusations represent up to 50% of all reported sex crimes.
6. Fight for preventative treatment of non-violent offenders. Studies show that many victims of custodial abuse just want the abuse to stop. They don't want family members in jail. Unfortunately, our current mandatory reporting laws often prevent families from seeking help for fear of prosecution.
7. Stop the spread of the stranger danger myth. While it is wise to teach your child to be wary of strangers, bear in mind that 93% of all sex offenses are committed by a family member or other person the child knows and trusts.
8. Believe that there is help. With both effective therapy and meaningful support, nearly all victims can go on to lead healthy, happy lives

Together we can create a safe and humane society where all Americans may overcome abuse, and flourish.

