

Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: Learn to Use a New Online Tool



Sarita Hudson
Director of Public Engagement
Stop It Now!

November 12, 2009

Conference call: 866.740.1260

Access Code: 5873500

ReadyTalk support: 800-843-9166

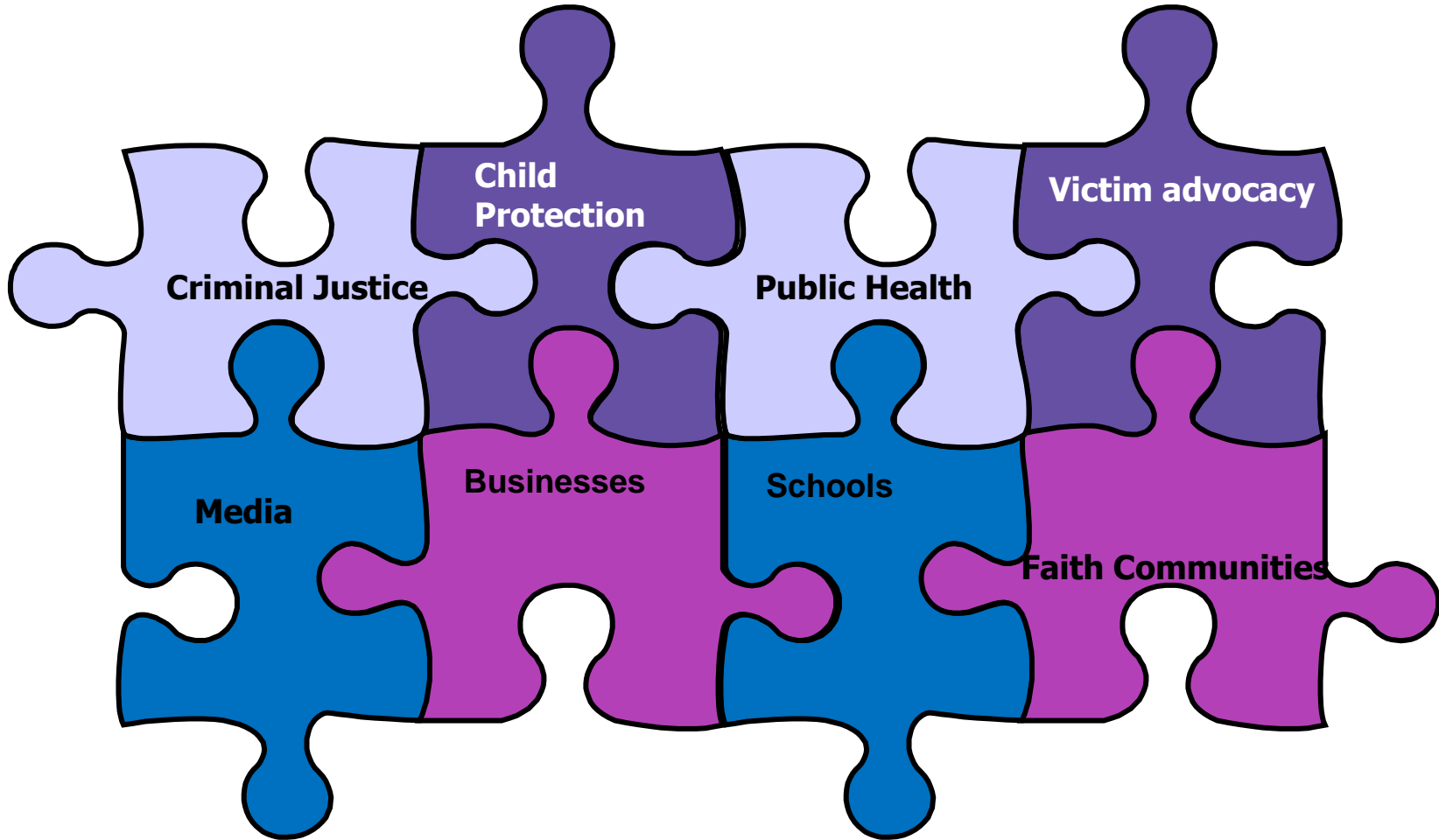
Agenda

- Who are we?
- What have we learned about prevention?
- Where does the information on the website come from?
- What are typical scenarios the OHC can help with?
- Comments/questions/next steps

Today's Participants

- Parents
- Child Welfare
- Child Advocacy Center
- Rape Crisis/Sexual Assault Recovery
- Domestic Violence
- Child Care Provider
- College Student
- Child Abuse Prevention
- Therapists
- Adoption Services
- Family Support
- Crisis Intervention
- Corrections
- Sales
- Medical staff

Collaboration



Can you name others?

Adults Are Accountable



*Children Have a
Right to Safety
and Well-being*

*Adults
Protecting
Children*



Your questions...

- *It seems too often we put the responsibility on the child to prevent their abuse...how do we change that and put the responsibility of prevention on society?*

Your questions...

- Is it really possible for us to prevent this menace by educating the adults?

YES!



Public Health Model

Define and measure the problem

Identifying risk and protective factors

Develop and evaluate prevention strategies

Disseminating effective strategies



Type	Date/Location	Audience/Sample	Findings
Social marketing research: focus groups and interviews	Vermont 1995-2000	Adults with sexual interest in children/have sexually abused children	Recommendations for marketing messages: -Message of hope -Speak the unspeakable -Hear from a peer -Compassion and accountability
Social marketing research: focus groups and interviews	Vermont 1995-2000	Family bystanders	Recommendations for marketing messages: -Break the secrecy -Support to stop shame and isolation -Need specific info -Message of hope
Web survey on incidence of child sexual abuse	Vermont 1995-1999	Adult survivors	-90% of people who abused them are male -83% close family or friend -9% reported abuse as child -16% reported abuse as adult -74% never reported
Random digit dial telephone opinion surveys on knowledge, attitudes, behavior regarding child sexual abuse	VT, Philadelphia, MN, GA, VA, WI, national 1995-2007	Adults	-44% believe child sexual abuse a major problem -29% of women, 14% of men sexually abused as children -95% believe children abused by someone they know -64% agree many children abused by other children or teens -68% agree some people who sexually abuse children would like to get help to stop -69% agree treatment programs can help people stop sexually abusing children -96% agree those in prison for sexually offending should get treatment
Meta -Analysis of existing research studies	2008	First time child sexual offending vs. sexual offending against adults and general offending	Risk factors for first time sexual offending against children: -Family factors strongly related to child sex offending -Harsh parenting has largest effect -Experience of sexual abuse -Sexual interest in a child

Impact

- Pioneering adult responsibility
- Collaboration with CDC
- Success in community-based programming



Activity	Date/Location	Audiences	Findings
Social marketing, community presentations, dialogues and trainings	Vermont 1995-2000	Community-wide Adults with sexual interest in/have sexually abused children Adult survivors Parents of youth with sexual behavior problems Family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Random-digit dial survey in 1995 (for baseline data) and follow-ups in 1997 and 1999 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adults increase ability to talk about sexual abuse ✓ People who have abused/at risk and their families call for help ✓ People who have abused/at risk take action ✓ Helpline calls increased
Social marketing , community presentations, dialogues and trainings, helpline	Minnesota 2003-2008	Community-wide Adults with sexual interest in/have sexually abused children Adult survivors Parents of youth with sexual behavior problems Family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stop It Now! Minnesota facilitated meaningful community/system change to prevent CSA throughout the state (N = 355) ✓ The collaborative effort resulted in an increase in adult action to prevent CSA (increased calls to the Stop It Now! Helpline from Minnesota) ✓ Preventative reporting (yellow calls) increased at a higher rate than “reactive” reporting (red calls) ✓ Stop It Now! Minnesota’s effort contributed to a reduced (reported) occurrence of CSA in Minnesota
Social marketing	Virginia 2005	Community	<p>Random-digit dial survey pre-post 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Listeners of radio ads were 3 times more likely to believe that child sexual abuse is preventable. ✓ Viewers of print materials were 10 times more likely to believe that they can prevent child sexual abuse
Helpline	National 1995-2009	Adults concerned about possible sexual abuse; Professionals seeking information and resources	<p>8540 calls from 1995-2009</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Who calls the Helpline?</i> 69% Family or friend, 6% Person with sexual interest in children/has abused, 20% Other (professional, media inquiry, etc) ✓ <i>Families are impacted:</i> 67% Known/Within Family, 32% Known/Outside Family, <1% Not Known ✓ <i>Adults and children at risk to abuse:</i> 68% Adult/Child, 32% Child/Child
Website	National 2009	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 41,000 unique visitors in August 2009, 98% increase from previous year, visitors from all US states, 136 countries; ✓ Top pages: sex offender registry FAQs, warning signs of concerning behavior among adults and children. ✓ 1702 downloads – 61% increase --Warning signs, Guidebooks ✓ 970 unique visitors to OHC in August 2009--900% increase over number of helpline callers/month



If your gut feeling is telling you that someone you know may want to touch a child in an inappropriate way, you can stop it before it starts. Visit www.stopitnow.org to learn about the warning signs or call 1-888-PREVENT between 9AM-6PM Monday-Friday to speak confidentially to a professional. Child sexual abuse isn't inevitable. It's preventable.

And you can  **Stop It Now!**



“ It doesn't feel right when I see them together. ”

CALL 1.888.PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



Hope and Relief



“Calling the Helpline gave me light at the end of the tunnel when before there was none. You offered resources that have already moved things forward for us. I just wanted to call you back to let you know how grateful I am that you are out there. Your number is on the fridge! I am going to share your materials with my colleagues and friends.”

Anonymous mother and
childcare provider

Challenge of Language

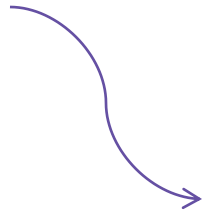
- Avoiding labels
- Describing behavior

Goal:  Norms change

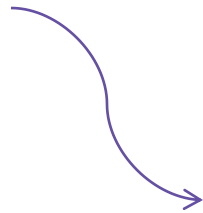


Norms change

Getting accurate information



Change in attitudes



Change in behavior



Taking action to ensure healthy,
happy childhood



Language we use

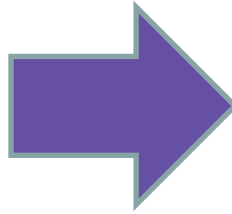
- People in recovery from sexual trauma or people who experienced sexual abuse as a child
- Children/youth with sexual behavior problems
- Adults with sexual interest in children



Helping Adults to Overcome Obstacles to Prevention

Moving from

- Stigma, Shame
- Isolation
- Helplessness
- No way to speak about this



By offering

- An ally
- Compassion
- Hope & Resources
- Practice talking



Spectrum of Behaviors

**Healthy
Appropriate
Responsible
Respectful**

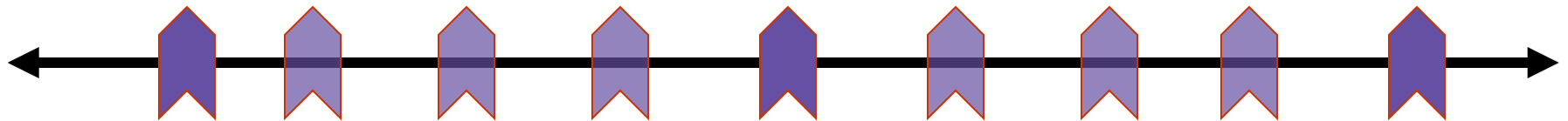
**Safe or
Protective**

**Inappropriate
Warning Sign**

**Potentially
Risky**

**Child
Sexual
Abuse**

Harmful



What You Can Get at StopItNow.org

- FAQs
 - Basic Facts
 - Key statistics
- Help with specific situations
- Prevention & Warning Sign tip sheets
- Guidebooks





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Everyone can be effective at prevention

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Welcome

Join Stop It Now![®] in preventing the sexual abuse of children by mobilizing adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.

Warning Signs

"Warning sign" is really just another way of saying "opportunity for prevention" - a chance for caring adults to

Free Materials for Taking Action



Create Your Family Safety Plan

These guidelines can help you create an environment to better protect your family from

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Your questions...

- *How do we find offenders and track them?*
- *Is there a type of person most associated with sexual abuse?*
- *Are sexual abusers ever really cured?*



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FAQs on the Sex Offender Registry

What Can I Do About Sex Offenders in My Neighborhood?

Discovering that a convicted sex offenderⁱ is living in your neighborhood can stir a range of feelings – fear, anger, lack of safety, loss of control. Don't panic! Sometimes, just having more information can diminish those feelings. There really are many things you can do to make the situation more manageable. Remind yourself and your neighbors that it's in everyone's best interest that this person succeeds in becoming a safe member of your community. Truth is, they probably want to succeed as well. Join with others to learn the best actions to take to keep everyone safe.

[What Can I Do To Protect My Family?](#)

[How Can I Find My Local Sex Offender Registry?](#)

[What About People Who Sexually Abuse Children Who Are NOT on the Registry?](#)

[How Have Others Responded to Someone on the Registry Living in Their Neighborhood?](#)

[What is Law Enforcement Doing to Keep Our Communities Safe?](#)

[What Can I Do to Protect My Family?](#)

A neighbor tells you about a "pedophileⁱ down the street", you learn of a "sexual predator" who is a member of your faith community, the local news reports on

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- + [What is the impact of child sexual abuse?](#)
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- + [Is child sexual abuse really such a big problem?](#)
- + [If child sexual abuse is such a serious problem, why don't I hear more about it?](#)
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- + [Do I need to know about child sexual abuse?](#)
- + [Does viewing child pornography contribute to child sexual abuse?](#)
- + [Are children who get sexually abused more likely to become sexually abusive as teens or adults?](#)
- + [How do adults sexually abuse children?](#)
- + [Why don't children tell if they have been abused?](#)
- + [What stops us from seeing abuse?](#)
- + [What can I do to learn more about how to prevent child sexual abuse?](#)

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NO. You cannot pick out a sex offenderⁱ in a crowd. People who may sexually abuse children are fathers, mothers, step-parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. They are neighbors, babysitters, religious leaders, teachers, and coaches. They come from all classes, racial and religious backgrounds and may be homosexual or heterosexual. Most of those we know about who sexually abuse children are men, but some are women.

Some people who abuse children have adult sexual relationships and are not solely, or even mainly, sexually interested in children. More than a third of those who engage in sexual activity with children are under the age of 18 themselves. In many of these instances, the abusive child may not understand that his or her sexual actions toward another child are harmful.

It's important to remember that many terms used to describe people who sexually abuse children, like "pedophileⁱⁱ" or "sexual predators," are often misused according to their clinical or legal definition. And, media stereotypes of "child predators" and "monsters" may actually make it more difficult for us to recognize



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Does treatment of adults who have sexually abused children really work?

YES. Experts agree that with successful completion of specialized treatment, people who sexually abuse children can learn how to control their actions and become part of the solution of keeping children safe.

Child sexual abuse is a crime and must be dealt with first through the child protection and criminal justice systems. But to prevent future abuse, it's in our best interest as a society to provide the best treatment available to every abuser who wants to change. It's also in our best interest as a society to build a system that really supports offenders in their recovery so that they have a chance to contribute positively to society. When people who abuse are firmly supported and held accountable by their friends and families, they are more likely to complete their treatment programs and live productive, abuse-free lives.



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... for ending child sexual abuse.

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It's better than you might think.

Adults

- With treatment over 30% less likely to commit new sex crimes

Hanson et al. (2002)

Youth

- With treatment over 60% less likely to commit new sex crimes

Reitzel & Carbonell (2006)



Your questions...

- *We have worked with clients whom have expressed fantasies about sexually abusing children. How do we effectively assess the risk factors and provide interventions?*



Training for professionals

- Training on working with children who have been abused:
 - National Children’s Advocacy Center, <http://www.nationalcac.org/>
 - National Child Protection Training Center, <http://www.ncptc.org/>
 - Child Welfare League of America, <http://www.cwla.org/>
 - National Children’s Alliance, <http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/>
- Training on working with youth with sexual behavior problems:
 - NEARI, <http://neari.com/>
 - Kempe Center, <http://www.kempe.org/>
- Training on working with adults with sexual interest in children
 - Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, <http://atsa.com/>
 - Child Molestation Research & Prevention Institute, <http://www.childmolestationprevention.org/>



What You Can Learn from StopItNow.org

What should I know about keeping children safe in my role as a....



Teacher



Clergy member



Child care provider



Parent

Your questions...

- *I want to know how to help educate our schools and community.*





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People Who Work with Children

Working with children and teens, you have a critical role in protecting children and creating a positive setting for children to be healthy and happy. Get the knowledge and resources you need to create a safe environment for youth... and to step in when you see inappropriate behavior. You may be the only one who recognizes warning signs and is in a position to take steps to keep a child safe from sexual abuse.

- [Learn about Safety in Education and Daycare Settings](#)
- [Learn about Prevention Steps Faith Communities Can Take](#)
- [Learn the Difference between Age-Appropriate and Concerning Behaviors in Children](#)
- [Know the Warning Signs](#)

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Safety In Daycare/Educational Settings

Children learn best in safe environments. Most child care providers and teachers know that protecting children from physical harm includes taking actions such as monitoring stairway entrances. But what about keeping children safe from sexual harm? What actions can be taken then?

Protecting Children From Sexual Harm: What Teachers and Childcare Providers Need to Know

Know the facts about abuse

Children are most at risk to be sexually abused by someone they know and trust. About half of sexual abuse (40 to 60%) happens within families. There is no typical sex offender profile--child sexual abuse happens in all racial, religious, age and ethnic groups, and at all socio-economic levels.

Do children sexually touch other children?

Yes. More than a third of those who sexually abuse children are under the age of 18 themselves. In many instances, especially with younger children, a child may not understand that his or her forceful sexual actions toward another child are

Get the latest tips & resources

... for preventing child sexual abuse.

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Safety in Education/Daycare

What Teachers and Childcare Providers Need to Know

- Know the facts about abuse
- Do children sexually touch other children?
- Learn about age-appropriate sexual development
- Learn about warnings signs
- Speak up when you recognize concerning behaviors
- Learn about Reporting
- What if this is my colleague?

What Teachers and Child Care Providers Can Do

- Create policies that reduce risk
- Create rules that protect caregivers
- Encourage adults to take responsibility
- Practice speaking up
- Question confusing or uncertain behaviors and practices
- Get age-appropriate information for kids
- Know how to report



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Resources

Find the resources and publications you need to prevent child sexual abuse. Use the links below to review and order copies of Stop It Now!'s publications, buy promotional materials to share with others, and find links to key organizations involved in prevention of child sexual abuse.

Promotional Materials in the [Stop It Now! store](#)

Stop It Now! [Publications and Articles](#)

[Prevention Tip Sheets](#)

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No votes yet




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Most Requested Resources and Organizations

Stop It Now![®] maintains this selected list of organizations that work on child sexual abuse. The missions and strategies of the organizations listed in this guide do not always reflect the views of Stop It Now!.

Listing in this guide does not constitute an endorsement or verification by Stop It Now! of the information, services or products advertised or provided (see **Terms of Use**). Organizational information was accurate at the time of compilation. Updates to this online listing occur periodically. If you know of an organization that should be listed, please **contact us**.

Crisis Lines

**Books and Publications on Child Sexual Abuse
Sexual Behavior Problems in Youth**

Referrals for Specialized Therapy or Treatment for Adults and Youth

Internet Safety

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

Finding Legal Advocacy

Resources on Age-Appropriate Sexual Behavior

Comprehensive Resources

Average:



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Your questions...

- *How can we encourage more conversation when parents are reluctant to talk about sexual abuse?*
- *What tools and awareness information can we give to parents to help protect their children from sexual abuse by intimate partners, family members and other acquaintances?*
- *I am mostly concerned about how to help my daughters be vigilant without scaring them.*





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Parents & Caregivers

Do Your Part to Protect Kids

Don't wait until you see a problem before you start taking action to protect kids. Learn some simple things you can do every day to make sure kids are safe and then teach others. Make sure every adult who cares about kids has the information they need to be confident about making a commitment to safety. You can begin prevention today.

Take Action!

- [Learn to Recognize Warning Signs](#)
- [Learn Everyday Actions to Keep Kids Safe](#)
- [Learn What to Do About Sex Offenders in Your Neighborhood](#)
- [What Parents Need to Know When Selecting a Program for a Child](#)

Average:



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What People Are Saying...

"I can't thank this line enough for all the information and support you have given me." I really didn't have any idea how to talk about this or what to say to my son. This has been so helpful. I've got it all written down."

-- Anonymous mother



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Warning Signs

"Warning sign" is really just another way of saying "opportunity for prevention" – a chance for caring adults to recognize possible risk and to take action to protect children. Read the behavioral descriptions in the links below. Some are serious violations. But many may suggest that a child may be at risk or an adult, adolescent or child is struggling to control potentially harmful impulses.

Remember, the most effective prevention takes place before there's a child victim to heal or an offender to punish.

If you need guidance and resources for a specific situation, visit our **Online Help Center**, <http://GetHelp.StopItNow.org>.

To view the lists, click on the links in the box below. To download a pdf version to share with others, click on the attached pdfs. See our **Terms of Use** for guidelines on sharing these Creative Commons licensed works.

- + [Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Sexual Abuse](#)
- + [Physical Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse](#)
- + [Age-Appropriate Sexual Behavior](#)
- + [Behaviors to Watch for When Adults Are With Children](#)
- + [Signs That an Adult May Be At-Risk to Harm a Child](#)
- + [Signs That a Child or Teen May Be At-Risk to Harm Another Child](#)
- + [What is Considered Child Sexual Abuse?](#)

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Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Sexual Abuse

Any one sign doesn't mean that a child was sexually abused, but the presence of several suggests that you begin asking questions and consider seeking help. Keep in mind that some of these signs can emerge at other times of stress such as:

- During a divorce
- Death of a family member or pet
- Problems at school or with friends
- Other anxiety-inducing or traumatic events

Behavior you may see in a child or adolescent

- Has nightmares or other sleep problems without an explanation
- Seems distracted or distant at odd times
- Has a sudden change in eating habits
 - Refuses to eat
 - Loses or drastically increases appetite
 - Has trouble swallowing.
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, insecurity or withdrawal
- Leaves "clues" that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues
- Writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images
- Develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places
- Refuses to talk about a secret shared with an adult or older child



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Stop It Now! » Warnings

Behaviors to Watch for When Adults Are With Children

We all have personal likes and things that make us uncomfortable. "Personal space" is the private area of control inside an imaginary line or boundary that defines each person as separate.

Ideally, that boundary helps us stay in charge of our own personal space. It helps keep out the things that make us uncomfortable - unsafe and unwanted feelings, words, images, and physical contact. Solid social rules strengthen the boundary. Behaviors that routinely disrespect or ignore boundaries¹ make children vulnerable to abuse.

Do you know an adult or older child who doesn't seem to understand what's acceptable when it comes to:

Personal Space

- Makes others uncomfortable by ignoring social, emotional or physical boundaries¹ or limits?
- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits? Uses teasing or belittling language to keep a child from setting a limit?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this physical contact or attention?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?

Relationships with children

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Warning Signs

FAQs: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

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Warning Signs

Behaviors to watch for in adults

- Looks to a child for emotional or physical comfort; shares personal or private information or activities normally shared with adults or peers
- Misses or ignores a child's cues; crosses personal boundaries by engaging in talk, touching or other behavior that makes them uncomfortable
- Makes fun of children's body parts, describes children with sexual words like "stud" or "sexy;" seems unusually interested children's or teens' sexual activities
- Misreads typical gestures of friendliness or affection as sexual interest
- Knowingly exposes a child to adult sexual interactions or images
- Sexually aggressive and intimidating; makes sexual threats or insults



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Prevention Tip Sheets

Everyone can take steps for prevention. Check out our prevention tip sheets to find what you can do. Learn about steps you can take for whether it's keeping your family safe, finding a safe school or camp for your kids, safety on the internet and more.

Share Prevention Tip Sheets in Your Community

We encourage you to print and share these tip sheets in your family and community. These are licensed under Creative Commons which allows you to reproduce them as long as you follow these [Guidelines](#).

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention for Faith Communities

Faith communities offer children wonderful opportunities to develop spiritually and to be part of a larger, caring community. Close caring relationships with adults are an important protective factor¹ for children. Families who are struggling often particularly need the friendship and informal mentoring opportunities provided by faith communities.

Unfortunately, as in all organizations where adults and older youth interact with children, faith communities can unintentionally provide opportunities for inappropriate sexual behaviors towards children.

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Concerned about Sex Offenders in Your Neighborhood

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Stop It Now! » **Faq Offender Treatment**

Don't Wait: Everyday Actions to Keep Kids Safe

The most effective prevention happens before a child is harmed. Kids are immediately safer when parents and caregivers take the time to learn about sexual abuse and its warning signs.

Parents and caregivers who make a commitment to speak up as soon as they have a concern, instead of waiting for certain evidence of harm, play an even more crucial role in a child's safety. Here are some things that you and your family can do to protect children from

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Set and respect clear guidelines

Family boundaries^f

Set and respect family boundaries^f. All members of the family have rights to privacy in dressing, bathing, sleeping and other personal activities. If anyone does not respect these rights, an adult should clearly tell them the family rules.

How to say no

Demonstrate boundaries^f by showing in your own life how to say "no." Teach your children that their "no" will be respected, whether it's in playing or tickling or hugging or kissing. For instance, if your child does not want to give Grandma a kiss, let the child shake hands instead. And make sure, too, that Grandma understands why this is important for the safety of the child.

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What People Are Saying...

"I think your website gives hope to those who need the most. It has great resources and was easy to navigate."

-- Submitted response to Stop It Now's web

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Stop It Now! » [Faq Child Pornography](#)

Talking to Children and Teens

Experience has taught us that actions by adults can be more effective than expecting kids to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Still, we know that children* also need accurate, age-appropriate information about child sexual abuse and confidence that adults they know will support them.

Clear communication is a cornerstone of effective prevention. Make sure other adults and older children understand the expectations kids will have of them and how their cooperation will help keep kids safe.

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When teaching kids about others' behavior towards them

Use concrete examples

Remember that in as many as **90%** of situations where a child is sexually harmed, the child (and often their family) knows the adult, youth or child who is acting in a sexually inappropriate way. When talking with kids about child sexual abuse, use examples and situations that make that reality clear. (For example, "What if you are at a friend's house and her older brother asks you to play a game that makes you feel weird or uncomfortable or involves something like touching or taking off your clothes?" "Sometimes relatives, like grandparents or uncles or cousins, don't understand the rules and touch kids in ways they're not supposed to. If that ever happens, be sure to tell Mom or Dad or another adult you trust so that we can help that person learn the rules.")

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Child Sex Abuse Prevention and Protection Center



Talking to our kids - Sometimes we just need a little push to get us started.



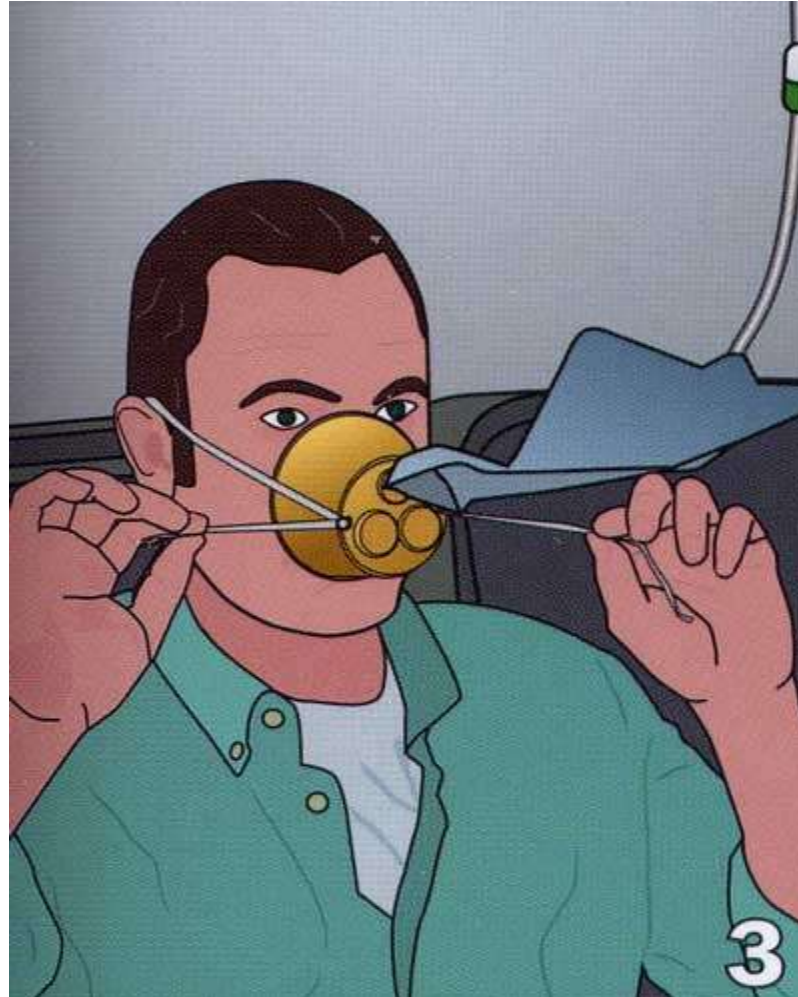
"I think it's time you discuss the facts of life with your son. He's been telling his classmates you got him on eBay."

Teach Children....

- Proper names of body parts
- Okay touch vs. inappropriate touch
- The difference between secrets and surprises
- Tricks
- Model healthy boundaries
- Talk to your kids about whom you/they trust.
- Set rules to prevent children from harming other children.

Open communication!

Adults have to be prepared first...





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Stop It Now! » Behaviors Watch Adult With Children

Create Your Family Safety Plan

The guidelines below can help you create an environment to better protect your family from sexual abuse. By understanding what puts children at risk of sexual abuse, we can take actions to counter those risks. Together we can create a community safety net with information and assistance to protect children from being sexually abused.

Educate everyone in the family

- Make sure each family member knows what healthy sexual development in children is, and what sexual behaviors might be of concern
- Learn to recognize warning signs that a child may have been sexually abused or that an adult, adolescent or child may be touching a child in a sexual way. Some abusive behaviors may not involve touching; for example showing pornography¹ to a child is abusive, even if the child is not touched.
- Teach children the proper names for body parts and what to do if someone tries to touch them in a sexual way.
- Make sure young children know that no one has the right to touch their private parts (unless for medical reasons) and that they should not touch anyone else's private parts.

Start talking with your family about sexual abuse

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Create Your Family Safety Plan

1. Set and respect clear family guidelines for personal privacy and behavior
2. Show your children you will support them if they feel scared, uncomfortable or confused
3. Discuss healthy sexuality and inappropriate behaviors before there's a problem
4. Teach children to set limits and to say no in uncomfortable situations
5. Prepare a list of people and organizations that can help

What You Can Learn from the Online Help Center

Worried about a particular situation?



- Facts and Information,
- Where to get help,
- Guidance and next steps...**unique** to your situation.

Online Help Center

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Can't tell anyone
- "I'm the only one"
- Situations are different
- Powerless
- Lack of knowledge
- Shame and anticipated judgment

ONLINE HELP CENTER

- Anonymous
- Others like you – testimonials
- Tailored information
- Urges taking action
- Information and resources to get help
- Non judgmental language

Scenarios

- *“My kids were ‘playing doctor’ and what they were doing to each other crossed a line.*
- *I think they learned this stuff from their teenage babysitter, but I can’t be sure.*
- *What do I do?”*

[GET STARTED](#)

"I have a gut feeling something is wrong."



Total Run Time: 2 min

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Welcome

If you are struggling with questions about child sexual abuse, we can help. The Stop It Now! Online Help Center gives you the specialized information, guidance and support you need to take action.

How to use the Stop It Now! Online Help Center:

STEP 1  *Answer a few basic questions about your concerns.*

The Online Help Center will offer options specific to your situation. [Privacy](#)

STEP 2  *Review your results.*

Choose the links that match your concerns to get answers to your questions.

What People Are Saying...

I couldn't sleep because of worry, so I got up and did an internet search and found your website. It made me cry with relief to have information on how to try to cope with the concerns I have about an extended family member and the safety of my baby daughter. Thank you.

Your Help Center

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▼ AGE

Are you:

- Age 17 or younger
- Age 18 or older

"I have a gut feeling something is wrong."

Links to organizations and resources for prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse


Total Run Time: 2 min

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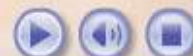
▼ AGE

▼ SITUATION

What are you most concerned about?:

- A child or teen in a situation involving an adult
- A child or teen in a situation involving another child or teen
- Adult survivor recovery resources
- An adult who might harm a child
- My own troubling thoughts toward children

"I have a gut feeling something is wrong."



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Your Help Center

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▼ AGE

▼ SITUATION

▼ URGENCY

Which statement best describes you?

- I don't know if abuse has occurred
- I believe abuse has occurred




"I have a gut feeling something is wrong."

Total Run Time: 2 min

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Every child needs and deserves protection and love.

Perhaps you have recently learned of a worrisome sexual interaction that occurred between two children – maybe two children you love or care about. Oftentimes parents feel at a loss as to how this could have happened and how they will re-establish safety in their families and among friends. You are not alone.

Maybe you want to reach out for help but are worried about what will happen – especially if you are the parent of the child who initiated the behavior. We can help you explore having these conversations and consider options for next steps.

Each child needs and deserves understanding and help to make sense of what has happened so they can heal and move forward. Here you can find ways to access those resources for healing and make a plan to prevent further harm starting now.

NEXT:

Explore a full menu of topics using the navigation (Your Help Center) on the top left of this page. For a quick response, go to the Key Steps on the top right.



Get free resources
for preventing child sexual abuse.

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Your Key Steps

When a Child or Teen's Sexual Behavior is Harmful to Another...

1. Learn why some children sexually abuse others
2. Find help for the child who may have abused
3. Respond to the child who has been abused
4. Make a plan to prevent further harm
5. Prepare for possible legal outcomes

[Read More >>](#)

Your Help Center

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Sexual behaviors between children often raise questions.

Perhaps a child said something vague or confusing about a game with another child. Maybe someone saw children playing in ways that worry you. Sometimes what starts out as innocent play can evolve into something adults recognize as no longer safe.

It can be unsettling to notice warning signs or concerning sexual behaviors in children. It is not always easy to tell the difference between natural sexual curiosity in kids and potentially abusive behaviors. We can help you get your questions answered so you can make a decision about when to step in.

It is hard to consider that a child we love or care about may have sexually acted out or abused a child we also love. If a child's language or behavior is concerning to you, they may need protection and/or help to manage their behavior. You can find the help you need to do that right here.

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Your Key Steps

When Sexual Behaviors Between Children Raise Questions...

1. Understand sexual behavior in children
2. Figure out if behaviors are harmful
3. Learn why a child might act in sexually harmful ways
4. Talk to the child/teen who initiated the behavior
5. Make a plan to prevent harm

Your Help Center

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[Definitions of Sexual Abuse](#)

[How Abuse Happens](#)

[Understanding Sexual Behavior in Kids](#)

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Understanding Sexual Behavior in Kids

- + [What is Age-Appropriate?](#)
- + [How to Recognize Concerning Behavior Between Children](#)
- + [When Children Abuse Other Children](#)
- + [Is There Help for Children with Sexual Behavior Problems?](#)

It can be hard to acknowledge that all of us, even children, are sexual beings, have sexual feelings and are curious about sex and sexuality. Children's curiosity can lead to exploring their own and each other's body parts by looking and touching. They may peek when family members are in the bathroom or changing clothes or try to listen outside the bedroom. They may look at magazines, books, videos, and on the internet.

It can be hard to tell the difference between "normal" sexual behaviors and behaviors that are signs that a child may be developing a problem. Sexual play that is more typical or expected in children will more often have the following traits:

- The sexual play is between children who have an ongoing mutually enjoyable play and/or school friendship.
- The sexual play is between children of similar size, age, and social

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Your Key Steps

When Sexual Behaviors Between Children Raise Questions...

1. Understand sexual behavior in children
2. Figure out if behaviors are harmful
3. Learn why a child might act in sexually harmful ways
4. Talk to the child/teen who initiated the behavior
5. Make a plan to

PRESCHOOL AGE (0 to 5 years)

Common:

Will have questions and express knowledge relating to:

- differences in gender, private body parts,
- hygiene and toileting,
- pregnancy and birth.

Will explore genitals and can experience pleasure.

Showing and looking at private body parts.

Uncommon:

- Having knowledge of specific sexual acts or explicit sexual language.
- Engaging in adult-like sexual contact with other children.

SCHOOL-AGE (6-8 years)

Common:

Will need knowledge and have questions about

- physical development, relationships, sexual behavior
- menstruation and pregnancy,
- personal values.

Experiment with same-age and same gender children, often during games or role-playing.

Self stimulation in private is expected to continue.

Uncommon:

Adult-like sexual interactions,

Having knowledge of specific sexual acts,

Behaving sexually in a public place or through the use of phone or internet technology.

SCHOOL-AGE (9-12 years)

Hormonal changes and external influences, such as peers, media and Internet, will increase sexual awareness, feelings and interest at the onset of puberty.

Story of Hope

Karen's Story

We are a blended family of seven. Both my husband and I share custody of our five children from previous marriages. More often than not, we have five independent, energetic, and lively kids running through the house. After a few years of this new marriage, things were going as smoothly as could be expected. The only child who seemed to be experiencing difficulty in adjusting to his new stepfamily was my middle son, Max.

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Our Resources

Warning Signs

Helpful Organizations

Organization: There's No Place Like Home

Description: Practical answers to sexual development questions that may assist you to have important conversations with the young people in your lives

URL: [Click Here](#)

Organization: A & D construction

Description:

Helpful Articles

Title:Families Are Talking (Links to Resources, Answers)

Abstract:Guidance on how to raise sexually healthy children

Visit Site

Authors:

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

Related Files:

Title:Parents Sex Ed Center:

Abstract:What adults need to know about teen sexuality, including how to talk to them about it

Visit Site

Authors:

Advocates for Youth

Related Files:



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Online Help Center

Stop It Now! » **Key Steps Child Concerns**

When a Child or Teen's Sexual Behavior is Harmful to Another...

1. Learn why some children sexually abuse others

Children may engage in sexually harmful interactions without knowing or understanding that they are hurting another child. With the help of a professional, the specific circumstances and the individual children involved can be considered. When the causes of a child's sexually concerning behavior are better understood, we are better able to help stop the behavior and prevent future harm.

Read **[Do Children Sexually Abuse Other Children](#)** to learn more about why a child might act in sexually harmful ways.

2. Find help for the child who may have abused

It is essential to act promptly. There is help available for children whose sexual behaviors are concerning or abusive. Finding specialized helpⁱ for the child/teen and their family supplies the guidance and learning needed to make everyone safer now. Specialized therapy can help you understand your child's sexual behaviors and give your family new tools and insights into how to best stay safe and protect others.

Learn **[where to find specialized help.](#)**

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Your questions...

- *What are the age appropriate sexual behaviors of preschool children?*
- *How to approach parents that may have children displaying behaviors/signs of child sexual abuse?*
- *At what point, do you tell them of your suspicions?*



Let's Talk

- Identify your goals
 - Focus on desired outcomes
- Consider the other person's point of view
- Consider your own emotions
- Consider the safety of having a conversation



When to talk...

Preventing initial harm

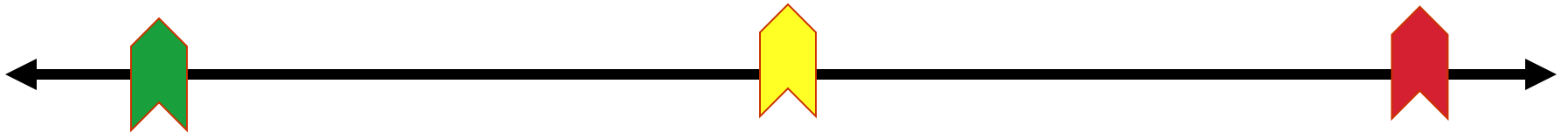
Anyone who can reinforce the Circle of Safety around children

When you recognize concerning behaviors

Anyone who can help or get help for those involved to prevent a child's being harmed.

After abuse

Anyone who can help re-establish safety for the child and family. Help them work through impact of abuse. Help to hold offender accountable and support treatment.



Stop It Now!

Prepare for the Conversation

- Listen to your gut feelings
- Educate yourself
- Begin a journal
- Gather resources
- Find support for yourself
- Reframe
- Plan what you want to say
- Practice, practice, practice
- Choose a time and place to talk



Scenarios

- *A 16-yr-old girl has disclosed to her aunt that she has been molested by her stepfather for the past 4 years*
- *The teen's own mother doesn't believe her*
- *“How can I help my niece if she begged me not to tell anyone?”*

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Help is available for everyone involved

Perhaps you've recently learned that a sexual interaction occurred between an adult and a child you know. You may be confused by the many conflicting feelings that can arise. You are not alone. You will find help here.

Maybe you have suspected something for awhile and are just now feeling ready to find the help each person needs so the abuse can stop and the healing can begin.

Wherever you are in your process of establishing protection and safety, we can help you consider your options for next steps.

Reaching out to family members, helping professionals or authorities can seem scary – especially if you feel you are alone. Our guidance and resources can make it a little easier to find help now so the abuse will stop.

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Your Key Steps

When You Believe a Child Has Been Sexually Abused

1. Respond carefully to the child.
2. Get help.
3. Report a situation of abuse
4. Find help for the adult who has abused
5. Make a safety plan to prevent further abuse

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Story of Hope

[Ellen's Story](#)



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[Reporting and Legal Issues](#)

[Filing Reports](#)

[Child Protective Services and Police](#)

[Legal Issues](#)

[Start Over](#)

Filing Reports

- + [How to File](#)
- + [Who is Required to Report?](#)
- + [When Must a Therapist File a Report?](#)
- + [What Might Happen After a Report is Filed?](#)

Usually the identity of the person who filed the report remains confidential. Typically CPS and/or police do not share information with anybody about the progress of an investigation – even with a protective parent. This can feel frustrating especially if the process is moving slowly.

Reports are reviewed for investigation

Once a report of child abuse has been made, the protective authorities (either child protective services or the police), decides whether or not to follow up the report. When a report is "screened in," it means that protective authorities will follow up with an investigation. When it is "screened out," it means that the report will not be investigated.

Reports can be "screened out"

When a report is "screened out," no action is taken, or the report is transferred to a more appropriate agency. Usually, a report is "screened out" when:

- There's not enough information on which to base an investigation

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When You Believe a Child Has Been Sexually Abused

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Story of Hope

Ellen's Story

Helpful Organizations

Organization: Child Help USA (local reporting numbers)

Description: National hotline (1.800.422.4453) and listing of local child abuse reporting numbers will link you to local reporting agencies.

URL: [Click Here](#)

Organization: The Child Welfare Information Gateway

Description: National clearinghouse of publications and resources related to laws on child abuse and neglect including state-specific information regarding reporting laws and policies

URL: [Click Here](#)

Helpful Articles

Title: Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect (General Information and State Statues)

Abstract: Easily searchable database to learn what is reportable and who is required by law to file reports listed by state

Visit Site

Authors:

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Related Files:

Title: Child Welfare Information Gateway (Investigation)

Visit Site

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Child Welfare Information Gateway

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Child Protective Services and Police

- + [What is Child Protective Services?](#)
- + [About Investigations](#)
- + [What Can I Do When the System Seems Unable to Protect My Child?](#)

The system is imperfect. But don't give up.

- Sometimes those whose job it is to protect children simply don't have enough information to proceed with a full investigation or set orders or mandates that will protect a child from harm. It can actually be extremely frustrating for CPS workers and police investigators when they are very concerned for a child but don't have enough concrete information to move forward. Ask them what additional information might be helpful.
- The investigative process sometimes happens slowly. The slow pace doesn't necessarily mean the authorities are not concerned. Often there is action being taken that can not be disclosed to family members who may call to ask about the status of an investigation. Some investigations can be prolonged and seem endless. Try to be patient and cooperate as best you can.
- In some cases you may feel that the professionals involved don't have enough training or expertise to detect risk or trauma to a child. Advocate the best you can to include professionals who have familiarity and experience with the dynamics of child sexual abuse



Get free resources

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Your Key Steps

When You Believe a Child Has Been Sexually Abused

1. Respond carefully to the child.
2. Get help.
3. Report a situation of abuse
4. Find help for the adult who has abused
5. Make a safety plan to prevent further abuse

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Trust your gut

- If you have a gut feeling that something isn't right, you might be tempted just to ignore it. Talking about sex is never easy. Talking about sexual abuse is even harder, especially when you care about the people involved. But your gut feeling is a reaction to something real that you have seen or heard. Many people have shared with us that in hindsight they wished that they had followed up on an intuition or pursued a concern they had. By taking action now, you can create a safer and more **secure environment** for a child.

Learn more

- You may be thinking to yourself, "Maybe the things I've noticed can be normal." "Maybe I'm just a prude and am blowing this out of proportion." In order to know what's normal and what's not, you can learn about healthy sexual development of children at different

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Help is available for everyone involved

Perhaps you've recently learned that a sexual interaction occurred between an adult and a child you know. You may be confused by the many conflicting feelings that can arise. You are not alone. You will find help here.

Maybe you have suspected something for awhile and are just now feeling ready to find the help each person needs so the abuse can stop and the healing can begin. Wherever you are in your process of establishing protection and safety, we can help you consider your options for next steps.

Reaching out to family members, helping professionals or authorities can seem scary – especially if you feel you are alone. Our guidance and resources can make it a little easier to find help now so the abuse will stop.

NEXT:

Explore a full menu of topics using the navigation (Your Help Center) on the top left of this page. For a quick response, go to the Key Steps on the top right.

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Usually the identity of the person who filed the report remains confidential. Typically CPS and/or police do not share information with anybody about the progress of an investigation – even with a protective parent. This can feel frustrating especially if the process is moving slowly.

Reports are reviewed for investigation

Once a report of child abuse has been made, the protective authorities (either child protective services or the police), decides whether or not to follow up the report. When a report is "screened in," it means that protective authorities will follow up with an investigation. When it is "screened out," it means that the report will not be investigated.

Reports can be "screened out"

When a report is "screened out," no action is taken, or the report is transferred to a more appropriate agency. Usually, a report

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Helpful Organizations

Organization: Child Help USA (local reporting numbers)

Description: National hotline (1.800.422.4453) and listing of local child abuse reporting numbers will link you to local reporting agencies.

URL: [Click Here](#)

Organization: The Child Welfare Information Gateway

Description: National clearinghouse of publications and resources related to laws on child abuse and neglect including state-specific information regarding reporting laws and policies

URL: [Click Here](#)

Helpful Articles

Title: Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect (General Information and State Statues)

Abstract: Easily searchable database to learn what is reportable and who is required by law to file reports listed by state

Visit Site

Authors:

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Related Files:

Title: Child Welfare Information Gateway (Investigation)

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Authors:

Child Welfare Information Gateway

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- + [Is the Child Telling Me the Truth?](#)
- + [What Might the Person Who Has Offended Be Thinking or Feeling after a Disclosure?](#)

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Break-up of relationships

Most of us know that speaking up about abuse may throw a family into turmoil, and that some important relationships can be changed or lost. It can be devastating to think that by speaking up we can lose people whom we care about, love or depend on. But if we don't speak up we are making the decision that our adult relationships are more important to us than the safety of a vulnerable child. Many adults recognize that they must be willing to risk a relationship with a spouse, family member or friend in order to intervene on a child's behalf. Although it's hard to realize during a crisis, families can recover over time, and many relationships, although changed, can and do heal.

Possible legal consequences

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Create Your Family Safety Plan

The guidelines below can help you create an environment to better protect your family from sexual abuse. By understanding what puts children at risk of sexual abuse, we can take actions to counter those risks. Together we can create a community safety net with information and assistance to protect children from being sexually abused.

Educate everyone in the family

- Make sure each family member knows what healthy sexual development in children is, and what sexual behaviors might be of concern
- Learn to recognize warning signs that a child may have been sexually abused or that an adult, adolescent or child may be touching a child in a sexual way. Some abusive behaviors may not involve touching; for example showing pornography¹ to a child is abusive, even if the child is not touched.
- Teach children the proper names for body parts and what to do if someone tries to touch them in a sexual way.
- Make sure young children know that no one has the right to touch their private parts (unless for medical reasons) and that they should not touch anyone else's private parts.

Help Others

All parents need a practical plan to keep their family safe from abuse.

Your \$25 gift means that 500 families will find our **Safety Plan** online.

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Start talking with your family about sexual abuse

What people are saying...

- Thank you, thank you, thank you for your web site. Early childhood sexual abuse at the hands of my father affected my health and development in incalculable ways, which took many years of therapy and loving support to heal. The candid information given here offers practical and compassionate help for abusers, people at risk of abusing, and the people around them.
- My brother is a survivor of abuse (and) made me aware of your website. I need information to share with my parishioners on preventing abuse. Since he feels confident with what you offer I looked you up.
- Your site was the only site that offered answers to the questions I was asking about sexual abuse *between* children. ..This has been so helpful. I'm so glad I found you.
- I have been investigating sex crimes against children for the past nine years, and I want you to know that your website is by far the best site I have ever seen when it comes to preventing child abuse



Key Website Statistics

- 41,000 unique visitors in August 2009, 98% increase from previous year
 - from all US states, 136 countries
 - Top pages: sex offender registry FAQs, warning signs of concerning behavior among adults and children.
- 1702 downloads – 61% increase
 - Warning signs, Guidebooks
- 970 unique visitors to OHC in August 2009
 - 900% increase over number of helpline callers/month



Spread the word!

- Talk to 5 people in the next week...
- Share Stop It Now! materials to schools, faith communities, doctor offices, etc...
- Blog about Stop It Now!
- Link to our website



Thank you



Contact: Deborah Donovan Rice
Sarita Hudson

drice@stopitnow.org
shudson@stopitnow.org