



# BROOMFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE INFORMATION

## Child Sexual Abuse— What Parents Need to Know

### 1. Talking to your child before an assault happens is the best prevention:

- Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety.
- Let your child know that safety rules apply to all adults, including family members.
- Encourage your child to tell someone about secrets that are making her / him feel bad.
- Let your child know that you are available to talk and listen. Allow your child to share thoughts and listen closely to what they are telling you.
- Help your child understand who they can trust. Talk with your child about this and listen to their input.
- Tell your child that if someone touches her / him to tell and keep telling until someone listens.
- Instilling a sense of strong self-esteem in your child may help your child avoid feelings of responsibility and guilt if they are victimized.
- Open sexual communication at home can make it easier for children to disclose sexual abuse by minimizing discomfort.
- A child is never to blame for the abuse. Children cannot prevent abuse - only the offender can.

### 2. Knowing perpetrator tactics and how a child may react can help you detect sexual abuse:

- Offenders may threaten to hurt the child or a family member of the child if they tell anyone about the abuse. This is common regardless of whether the perpetrator is a family member, friend, acquaintance, or stranger.
- A child often feels that she / he is to blame for the abuse. The offender may reinforce this by using guilt tactics on the child.
- Offenders often follow up abusive incidents with treats or gifts for the child. This is very confusing for the child and may make her / him feel guilty for accepting gifts and / or for feeling bad about the abuse.
- Be aware if your child talks a lot about a particular older person.
- Be aware of individuals (family member, friend, neighbor) who spend an inordinate amount of time with your child.
- It is common for a child to deny that abuse happened when it did or tell about the abuse and then recant their original statement. There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse.

### 3. Responding appropriately when your child is victimized can make all the difference in her / his healing process.

- If you think abuse is going on, act on that feeling or instinct.
- Believe your child when they tell.
- Don't force a child to talk or stop talking about the abuse. Allow them to go at their own pace. Be patient.
- Remind your child how strong she / he was for telling about the abuse.
- Getting your child involved with a support group of peer survivors can help eliminate feelings of isolation.
- Get support for you and your child; this is a very difficult issue for any one person to handle.





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### Sexual Abuse Includes:

- Fondling or touching the child's private parts
- Forcing the child to touch another's private parts
- Exposing children to adult sexual activity
- Exposing children to pornographic materials
- Having children perform in pornographic movies
- Having children posing for pornographic materials
- Sexual intercourse

### Statistics

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted before age 18.
- 85% of child sexual abuse is committed by relatives, close family friends, or an adult the child knows and / or trusts.
- The median age that girls and boys are sexually abused is 9 years old.

### Teaching Personal Safety Rules

- Include personal safety rules around sexual abuse in your conversations about fire, traffic, and bike safety.
- Discuss with children the difference between safe and unsafe touches. The key here is that they get to decide what feels safe and what feels unsafe.
- Teach children about private parts of their body and the proper names for all their private parts. (Private parts include mouth, chest, genitals or the area between their legs, and their bottom.)
- Let children know that safety rules apply to all adults, not just strangers (this includes family members, friends, older kids, babysitters, etc.)
- Let children know that abuse is never their fault, even if they don't follow the safety rules or are doing something that is against the rules when the abuse occurs.
- Let children know their body belongs to them and it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts. Address exceptions to the rule and why there is a difference (medical exams, help with bathing or going to the bathroom, etc.)
- Teach children that it is okay to say NO if someone tries to touch their body or makes them do thing that feel uncomfortable, no matter who the person is (this includes family members, friends, older kids, babysitters, etc.).
- Teach children to not keep secrets about touching or bad feelings, no matter what the person said would happen if the child told.
- Teach children about the difference between a secret and a surprise.
- Talk to children about how to identify a safe adult for them to talk to if someone touches them.
- Encourage children to tell and keep telling until an adult does something to help them.





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## Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Excessive clinging or crying
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Fear of particular adults or places
- Bedwetting
- Problems at school
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Alcohol or drug use
- Change in eating habits
- Frequent touching of or preoccupation with private parts
- Unexplained pain, irritation, or bleeding of mouth or private parts
- Any unexplained changes in behavior or development of new behaviors

## How to Support a Child Who Has Been Abused

- Listen to and believe the child when she / he discloses sexual abuse.
- Reassure the child that her / his safety is important to you.
- Assure the child that she / he is not to blame for the abuse.
- Remember that how you respond to the child is critical to her / his ability to deal with the trauma of abuse; try not to overreact.
- Don't pressure the child to talk (or stop talking) about the abuse. Allow the child to talk at her / his own pace.
- Get support for the child, family members, and yourself. This is a very difficult issue for any one person to handle.

### Additional resources:

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: [www.ncmec.org](http://www.ncmec.org)

Blue Sky Bridge, Child Advocacy Center: [www.blueskybridge.org](http://www.blueskybridge.org)

Colorado ICAC—Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force: [www.coloradoicac.com](http://www.coloradoicac.com)

Broomfield Police Department  
Non-Emergency 303-438-6400  
Emergency 9-1-1

