

## It is highly likely that you know a child who has been or is being abused.

- Experts estimate that 1 in 10 children are sexually abused before their 18th birthdays.
- 1 in 5 children are sexually solicited while on the Internet.
- Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults (including assault on adults) occur to children ages 17 and under.
- The median age for reported sexual abuse is 9 years old.
- Most child victims never report the abuse.
- Sexually abused children who keep it a secret or who tell but are not believed are at greater risk for psychological, emotional, social and physical problems, often lasting into adulthood.
- As many as 60% of children are abused by family members or people the family trusts; 40% by older or more powerful children.
- About 90% of children are abused by someone they know.
- People who abuse children look and act just like everyone else.
- Those who sexually abuse children are drawn to settings where they can gain easy access to children, such as sports leagues, faith centers, clubs, and schools.

## Ways you can protect your child from sexual abuse:

### 1. Talk openly with your child.

Good communication decreases a child's vulnerability and increases the likelihood that the child will tell you if abuse has occurred.

- Teach children that secrets can be dangerous, and it's best not to keep secrets from adults.
- Teach correct words for body parts.
- Teach children about their bodies; what sexual abuse is and places on their bodies no one is allowed to touch.
- Tell them that abusers are sometimes trusted friends and family members.
- Teach children Internet safety, including never giving out their addresses, e-mail addresses or phone numbers.
- If a child seems uncomfortable or resistant to being with a particular adult, ask why.
- Be a good listener. If your child comes to you about something they are concerned about, take the time to listen.
- Tell your child that they will never get in trouble if they tell.
- Don't react negatively. Often times, children will tell part of what happened to see how you will react. If you respond negatively or emotionally, they will shut down.
- Give your child permission to protest when they feel boundaries are crossed.
- Offenders choose vulnerable children. Give positive attention to your child to develop a strong relationship.

### 2. Talk to organizations that serve your family and child.

Don't be afraid to ask organizations, such as day cares, summer camps, and churches, to show you their policies regarding abuse prevention.

- At a minimum, youth serving organizations should do criminal background checks, review professional recommendations on employees and volunteers, and have policies that limit adult's one-one-one time with children.
- Ensure that youth-serving organizations have policies in place for dealing with suspicious situations and reports of abuse.
- Insist that youth-serving organizations train their staff and volunteers to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

### 3. Follow your gut.

If you have an uneasy feeling about someone, trust your instincts.

- If you have a friend or relative who is always looking to be alone with your child or shows an inappropriate interest in your child's life, be cautious.
- Think carefully about the safety of any one-adult/one-child situations. Choose group situations.
- Take your own history into account. Don't think that you are the only person in your family in whom your relative had an inappropriate interest. Chances are this person is still pursuing children.

## What is child sexual abuse?

Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other.

Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act, including sexual contact. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet.

If a child discloses abuse to you or you suspect or have reason to believe a child is being abused, contact the local police or social services.

**To learn more about child abuse call Foothills to schedule a training:**

*Stewards of Children*  
Sexual abuse prevention training for adults who work with kids.

*Stand Up For Kids!*  
Training for mandated reporters on how to recognize and respond to all types of abuse or neglect.

This project was supported by the Virginia Department of Social Services using funds from the Victims of Crime Act.

## Local Resources:

**Albemarle Police Department**  
296-5807

**Charlottesville Police Department**  
970-3280

**Albemarle Department of Social Services** 972-4010

**Charlottesville Department of Social Services** 970-3400

**Albemarle Commonwealth Attorney**  
972-4072

**Charlottesville Commonwealth Attorney**  
970-3176

**Albemarle Victim Witness Program**  
972-5830

**Charlottesville Victim Witness Program**  
970-3176

**Region Ten Community Services Board**  
972-1800

**Piedmont Court Appointed Special Advocates** 971-7515

**Children, Youth & Family Services, Inc.**  
296-4118

**Sexual Assault Response Agency Hotline**  
977-RAPE (7273)

**Shelter for Help in Emergency Hotline**  
293-8509

**Runaway Emergency Services Hotline**  
972-SAFE (7233)

## Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse



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