

## WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

- Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse, regardless of cultural background or income level.
- Children need to feel loved, valued and protected.
- Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well-being.
- Often, there are no physical signs of sexual abuse.
- Many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.
- The offender may have threatened to hurt a family member, or the child may feel that she/he is to blame for the abuse.
- It is important to show interest in your child's activities. Let her/him know that you are available to talk and listen. Allow your child to share thoughts and feelings with you.
- The child is NEVER to blame for the abuse. Children cannot prevent abuse--only the offender can.
- Studies suggest that personal safety rules can be taught and understood by children age 3 and up.
- There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse. It is more common for children to deny that abuse has happened when it has.

## FOR HELP OR TO LEARN MORE:

24-hour, Toll-free  
Confidential Hotline  
888-999-5545 (English)  
888-568-8332 (Español)

You will be connected to the sexual assault crisis member program nearest you.

Each program provides:

- 24-hour crisis hotline
- Advocacy for children and non-abusing parent with police and court
- Short-term counseling
- Support groups
- Information & referral

All services are free and confidential

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# What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

A guide for parents  
to raise safe,  
healthy children



Connecticut Sexual Assault  
Crisis Services, Inc.  
96 Pitkin Street  
East Hartford, CT 06108  
860-282-9881  
[www.connsacs.org](http://www.connsacs.org)

## SEXUAL ABUSE INCLUDES:

- fondling or touching the child's private parts or forcing the child to touch another's private parts
- exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic materials
- having children perform in pornographic movies or pose for pornographic materials
- sexual intercourse



## SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE INCLUDE:

- excessive clinging or crying
- sleep disturbances and/or nightmares
- fear of particular adults or places
- bedwetting
- problems with school (refusal to attend or a drop in grades)
- depression; withdrawal from family and friends
- alcohol or drug use
- change in eating habits
- frequent touching of private parts



THESE SIGNS ARE POSSIBLE INDICATORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY MEAN SEXUAL ABUSE HAS OCCURRED.

## PROMOTE YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY AND HEALTH

Facts: Approximately 90% of child sexual abuse is committed by relatives, close family friends, or someone else the child knows and trusts. Almost 50% of child sexual abuse is committed by children/youth engaged in sexually harmful behaviors.

- Pay attention to the behavior of adults and older children around younger children.
- Trust your feelings.
- If a person's behavior makes you feel uncomfortable, talk to that person.
- Be sure that person gets help if needed.



Facts: One in four girls and one in six boys is sexually assaulted before age 18. In Connecticut, 24% of victims seen at sexual assault crisis services in 2009-2010 were under the age of 18.

- Remember that how you respond to your child is critical to her/his ability to deal with the trauma of abuse.
- Allow your child to talk at her/his own pace about the abuse.
- Believe your child. Reassure your child that her/his safety is important. Assure your child that she/he is not to blame for the abuse.
- Explain to your child what you need to do to help him/her. Get medical attention for your child. Call your local sexual assault crisis service for assistance for yourself and your child.

## TEACH YOUR CHILD EARLY:

- the difference between safe and unsafe touches; what is appropriate physical affection.
- the proper names for all private parts.
- their bodies belong to them; it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts and it is not okay for them to touch others' private parts.
- it is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable--no matter who the person is.
- they should not keep secrets about touching--no matter what the person says.

## TEACH BY CONSISTENT EXAMPLE:

- Use touch in appropriate, respectful ways with your child and others (i.e., no slapping, pushing, punching, etc.). Expect the same from your child and the other people in your life.
- Speak openly and matter-of-factly about the human body and human development. Call private parts by their proper names.
- Respect your child's right to refuse to give or receive a kiss or hug to/from a family member or friend; do not use coercion, disappointment, or other tactics to change the child's mind.
- Listen to your child's concerns and respond in supportive ways.

