

What to do if your child discloses sexual abuse



- Look for the signs of abuse.
- Find a child-safe place and time to talk to the child about your concerns or any disclosure from them.*
- Believe what you are being told. Most abuse reports are genuine.
- Listen carefully and remain calm to make the child more willing to talk about their abuse.
- Don't ask leading or probing questions. Ask open-ended questions like "what happened next?"
- Answer their questions the best you can. Be honest if you don't know something.
- Validate their feelings about how difficult it is to discuss the situation and subject.
- Assure them that the abuse is not their fault.
- Determine the specific details of the abuse if possible and make notes after the conversation to accurately report the abuse to authorities.
- Keep the child safe as you notify authorities (police and/or child protective services) and then follow up to make sure that they have investigated.
- Don't confront the perpetrator directly. But identify and protect other children who may be abused by the same perpetrator.
- It's not advisable to tell anyone except any involved organization's reporting official(s) in order to protect the child's privacy and the integrity of the investigation.

* Child-safe means a place and time that is private enough for the child to disclose abuse, but keeps the child safe from further abuse/intimidation.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCE LIST

If you see a child in immediate danger, call 911

NATIONAL

National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673

Child Advocacy Centers (Western Region)
www.westernregionalcac.org

Reporting Requirements by State
www.childwelfare.gov

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education
www.darkness2light.org

LOCAL

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

Clackamas County, OR 971-673-7112
Clark County, WA 800-562-5624
Multnomah County, OR 503-731-3100
Washington County, OR 503-681-6917

Oregon State Hotline 855-503-7233
Washington State Hotline 866-363-4276

Law Enforcement Resources

Sheriff, Clackamas County, OR 503-655-8211
Sheriff, Clark County, WA 360-397-2211
Sheriff, Multnomah County, OR 503-823-3333
(includes Portland and Gresham Police)
Sheriff, Washington County, OR 503-629-0111
Police, Vancouver, WA 360-487-7400

Visit our website for a complete resource list and a printable version of this brochure

You can help Restore Hope advocate for children and their safety

Become a volunteer or facilitator for our Stewards of Children® training program

Contact Pam Congdon for more information
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Are you
WORRIED
about a child's
safety?

Know the signs of

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Learn the potential warning signs so that ongoing abuse can be halted and past abuse is reported and dealt with

www.restoretheirhope.com

Watch for potential warning signs of child sexual abuse

Be concerned about child sexual abuse (CSA) if a child displays even some of these symptoms and/or starts to show significantly increased levels of the following abuse indicators. (This list is not all-inclusive and is drawn from multiple sources)

Psychological signs*

- Sudden and noticeable behavioral and/or physical changes
- Guilt or shame-based behaviors
- Overriding depression/frequent crying
- Nightmares/long-term sleeping difficulties/waking up screaming
- Signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Exhibiting obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) behaviors
- Displaying anger/hostility/"acting out" behavior
- Belief that he/she is bad, evil or sinful
- High anxiety level
- General fearfulness/fear of specific situations or persons
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Aggressive and/or risky personal behaviors (i.e. bullying others or self-mutilation)
- Hyperconsciousness or hypervigilance
- Regressive behavior patterns (returning to an earlier stage of social development)
- Low self-esteem/social withdrawal/low self confidence
- Feeling claustrophobic
- Sudden desire to be perfect or control situations (i.e. "becoming a control freak")
- Inability to trust others
- Sudden onset of secretiveness
- Anger at God, oneself, or specific individuals
- Fire starting
- Cruelty shown to animals
- Becoming a runaway
- Exhibiting a general failure to thrive

Physical symptoms*

- Physical addictions (i.e. drugs or alcohol) with accompanying addiction-related behaviors
- Sudden onset bedwetting, constipation, or involuntary defecating
- Difficulty using the toilet or void-related actions (i.e. must be alone to void, feces spreading)
- Sudden onset genital pains, discomfort or unusual genital concerns or questions
- Sudden onset rectal or vaginal bleeding

- Clothing that is torn, bloody or stained
- Taking excessive showers or baths (i.e. feeling "dirty")
- Sudden weight gain or loss of appetite/eating disorders (i.e. bulimia or anorexia nervosa)
- Unexplained nausea or vomiting
- Frequent headaches
- Unexplained long-term fatigue
- Chronic back pain
- Auto-immune disease (i.e. fibromyalgia or irritable bowel syndrome)

Sexually-based signs*

- Sudden gender confusion (especially in males)
- Sudden onset of sexualized behavior or knowledge that is age or situationally inappropriate
- Compulsive sexualized behavior (i.e. masturbation of oneself or of other children or adults)
- Close intimate contact with older adolescents, teens or adults (i.e. kissing or fondling)
- Obsessive interest in pornography
- Sexually-based or bodily function-based fetishes and fantasies
- Feelings of sexual inadequacy or a total lack of appropriate interest in sex (i.e. asexuality)
- Fear of personal or sexual intimacy
- Fear of becoming a sexual abuser of other children and/or vulnerable persons
- Drawings or games with sexual abuse implications
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Parent or guardian who is vehemently opposed to formal sex education for their child

Social situations to consider/watch*

- Bullying by other children or adults or bullying of others by the child
- Avoidance behaviors (i.e. avoiding particular situations or persons for no apparent reason)
- Avoidance of gym-based situations and/or PE classes
- Spending a lot of time with an older person (i.e. frequent TV or internet viewing together)
- Fast-developing close relationship with a cleric, athlete/coach, school official or any group leader
- Decrease in school attendance, performance and/or involvement in school-related activities
- Trying to behave uncharacteristically mature
- Unexplained pregnancy and/or unexpectedly getting married to an older person
- Frequent boyfriends of a female parent or guardian
- An unusually close mother/son, father/daughter or child/leader relationship
- Situations for a child that "just don't feel right"

IMPORTANT: Listen to your inner warning radar

* Most children will normally display some of these signs and symptoms during their developmental years. This does not necessarily indicate abuse. What should be paid attention to is sudden onset changes and their severity, dramatic changes in the child's personality or social functioning and behaviors that are not appropriate for given situations.

If you suspect CSA, report it to authorities (police and/or child protective services) and do what you can to protect the child. Most jurisdictions protect CSA reporters who make good faith reports even if the abuse cannot be substantiated.



BEST PREVENTION PRACTICE:
Be diligent and present in a child's life to keep abuse from ever occurring



Contact us for more information:
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Dedicated to keeping children safe
from child sexual abuse
and helping adult survivors heal

www.restoretheirhope.com