

Child Sexual Abuse In the US

What is child sexual abuse?

The best description to date comes from the Courage to Heal. (Davis and Bass)

"Child sexual abuse is a violation of power perpetrated by a person with more power over someone who is more vulnerable. This violation takes a sexual form, but it involves more than sex. It involves a breach of trust, a breaking of boundaries, and a profound violation of the survivor's sense of self. It is a devastating and selfish crime. The most important thing in defining sexual abuse is the experience of the child. It takes very little for a child's world to be devastated. A single experience can have a profound impact in a child's life."

One in five children will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18.
29% of forcible rapes in the US happen to victims who are less than 12 years old (RAINN).

What can I teach my children?

- ❖ They don't have to keep secrets that make them feel bad.
- ❖ They don't have to share their bodies with anyone.
- ❖ They can say "NO" if someone tries to abuse them.
- ❖ They can try to get away.
- ❖ If there is someone who is abusing them, they should tell an adult: a parent, another relative, a teacher, pastor, or a doctor.
- ❖ They should keep telling until someone believes them.

What are some signs or indications that a child is being sexually abused?

- ❖ Pain or irritation in the genital area.
- ❖ Vaginal or penile discharge.
- ❖ Difficulty with urination.
- ❖ Aggressive or seductive behavior with classmates, teachers or other adults.
- ❖ Self destructive behavior such as alcohol or drug use, running away or causing intentional physical harm to self.
- ❖ Extreme moodiness.
- ❖ Sleepiness.
- ❖ Inappropriate sexual behavior or knowledge.
- ❖ Comments such as, "My mother's boyfriend does things to me when she's not there." Or, "I'm afraid to go home tonight."

Child sexual abuse is a real problem in America; this sheet is intended to provide information on the subject, but is by no means a complete description. If you have further questions feel free to contact Family Resource Center at 803-425-4357 or the 24-hour hotline at 1-800-585-4455.