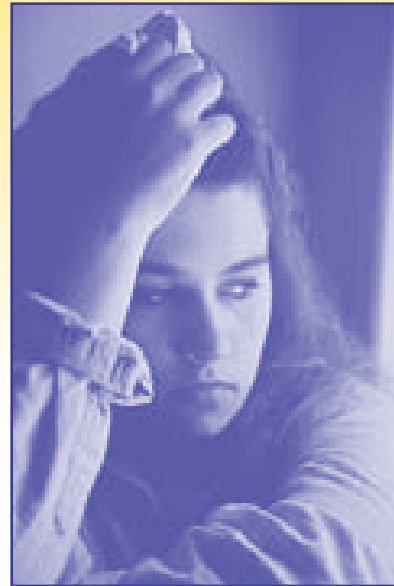


To very young children the word “stranger” holds no meaning: all faces are friendly. It is the responsibility of their caregiver to make children aware of the dangers of molestation and abuse. The goal should be to educate children rather than frighten them. Children are taught to view adults as being honest and trustworthy.

Sexual abuse is devastating because of the betrayal of that trust. When the offender is a member of the child’s family, there are additional problems. There are, however, services available to help the child and entire family work through this experience.



The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children states that sexual molestation occurs when:

“A significantly older individual engages in any type of sexual activity with individuals legally defined as children.”

Locations

For more information about services offered at The Center, please call any of our locations or visit our website.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky Campus

Open 24 Hours

P.O. Box 2048

Louisville, KY

(502) 581-7273 *Rape Crisis Line*

(800) 656-HOPE *Rape Crisis Line*

(502) 581-7242 *TDD*

West Louisville Campus

(502) 775-6408

Mt. Washington Office

(502) 538-0212

Shelbyville Office

(502) 633-7800

INDIANA

Southern Indiana Campus

Open 24 Hours

New Albany, IN

(812) 944-6743 *Crisis Line*

Corydon Office

(812) 734-0280

Marengo Office

(812) 365-2338

Scottsburg Office

(812) 752-7996

(877) 803-7577

Toll Free Crisis Line • 24 Hours

www.thecenteronline.org

The Center for Women and Families is committed to creating an environment in which diversity is valued and assures no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, subjected to discrimination under, or denied employment on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, handicap, disability, veteran status, familial status, or political opinion.

These programs are funded, in part, by the following: U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Dept. of Justice (OVC), U.S. Department of Labor, Kentucky Justice Cabinet, Kentucky Housing Corporation, Dept. of Mental Health/Mental Retardation Services, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, Kentucky General Assembly, Indiana Family & Social Services Admin., Community Foundation of Southern Indiana, Metro Louisville City Government, Metro United Way, United Way of Scott County, Harrison Co. Community Foundation, Scott County Community Foundation, Floyd County General Fund, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, Preventative Health & Health Services Block Grant, Fiscal Courts of Spencer, Shelby, Trimble, Oldham, Bullitt, and Henry Counties in Kentucky, Younger Woman’s Club of Louisville, Target, Caesars Riverboat Casino Foundation, UPS Foundation, General Mills, and other grants received from local businesses, foundations, and contributions.

Child Sexual Abuse



Information from



**THE
CENTER
FOR
WOMEN
AND
FAMILIES**

Parental Reactions

Finding out your child has been the victim of sexual abuse can be one of the most difficult situations for parents to face. If you learn your child has been sexually abused, keep in mind that to a great extent, your reaction will determine how your child will heal.

- Listen carefully to your child.
- Support your child for telling through praise, belief, sympathy, lack of blame.
- Reassure your child that you will protect him or her from further abuse. He or she is safe now.
- Provide opportunities for your child to talk about the abuse.
- Realize the recovery process takes time and the help of supportive professionals.
- **Believe your child.**

Parents are not always the first to hear about the abuse. Abused children sometimes fear that their parents won't believe them or would be burdened by the knowledge.

Therefore, children will sometimes report the abuse to someone they trust at school. Teachers may notice indications of molestation in the child's drawings or writings, or in the ways in which the child interacts with other children. A physician may discover suspected abuse during a routine physical examination. Child Protective Services may receive a call from a suspecting family member, friend or school official. Don't allow your feelings of guilt or anger stand in the way of good communication with your child.



Progression of Molestation

- Offender exposes child to pornography.
- Offender exposes himself or herself or views child's body.
- Offender touches own body first then child's.
- Offender touches child's genitals and has the child touch him or her.
- Offender performs oral sex on the child or has the child perform oral sex on him or her.
- Offender performs actual penetration - usually with tongue, fingers and then, the penis. Penetration can be vaginal/anal.

Facts about Abusers

Molesters cannot be classified in any set group of race, age, gender, religion, economic status, level of intelligence, profession or marital status.

Sexual abuse is a highly repetitive, compulsive behavior. Most people who molest children are not insane.

97% of known abusers are male, relatively young, and start abusing as teens. Women can be abusers as well.

Most sexual offenders molest numerous times before being apprehended.

If you suspect a child is being physically or sexually abused or neglected, you must report it to the proper authorities.

We at The Center are here to provide support for victims of sexual abuse and their loved ones. We provide support and advocacy at hospitals, police stations and in court, as well as counseling with qualified therapists.

Rape Crisis Hotline: (800) 656-HOPE
Child Abuse Hotline: (502) 588-4550
Crimes Against Children Unit: (502) 588-2465

Reporting the Abuse

As a parent, reporting the abuse is the only way to have the molestation stopped legally and to ensure your child's safety. As a child's caregiver, if you suspect a child is being abused, you must report it to the proper authorities.

Steps to reporting consist of the following:

- File a police report.
- Report the abuse to Child Protective Services.
- Police officer and/or social worker from Child Protective Services will interview the child.
- Have the child examined by a qualified or specially trained doctor.
- If there is substantial evidence of abuse, the case is referred to a prosecuting attorney.
- A warrant is issued for the arrest of the offender.
- If his whereabouts are known, he is arrested.
- At the first court appearance the judge will determine if there is a probable cause to pursue the case. If so, the defendant is released on bond, or held without bond. If not, the case is dismissed.
- The next court appearance is to give the defendant an arraignment date for court-this could be days or weeks later.
- Plea bargaining may take place.
- Arraignment-judge will hear a plea or the date for a jury trial is set. If there is a plea, the case is closed and the child doesn't have to testify.
- If no plea bargain is reached, the judge will hold a competency hearing to decide if the child will be a competent witness. The child will be asked if he or she knows the difference between a lie and the truth.
- Jury trial.



Steps to Healing

The following is a list of common feelings that parents experience after they become aware that their child has been sexually abused.

It is very important to allow yourself to experience these feelings as they occur. You may experience all or only one of these steps on your way to acceptance.

- **Shock and denial** - feeling of disbelief.
- **Anger** - can be vented through family quarrels, threatening the molester.
- **Guilt and depression** - victim or victim's parents feel responsible.
- **Bargaining** - trying to forget by becoming too involved in other activities.
- **Acceptance** - dealing with what happened.

Safety Rules for Parents

- Know where your child is at all times.
- Don't leave your child alone in any public place - even a restroom, a toy store or in the car in a parking lot.
- Don't put your child's name, first or last, on clothing or belongings. A person who calls your child by his or her first name may be trusted by your child.
- Make it clear to your child to whose home he or she may go to play or visit.
- Know your child's friends and those responsible for supervising them.
- Notice if someone pays undue attention to your child.
- Respect your child's reluctance to be with someone, even if it is someone familiar.
- Be involved in your child's activities.
- Never belittle any fear or concern your child has - real or imaginary.
- Encourage parent-child communication.