

## **KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES**

#### **What is child sexual abuse?**

**Child sexual abuse** is any form of sexual activity imposed upon a child by an adult or another child in a position of power, authority, or influence. Child sexual abuse can involve touching the intimate parts of a child's body, enticing or forcing the child to have sexual relations, or participating in non-touching offenses such as obscene phone calls or taking pornographic photos.

#### **What do the statistics say?**

Statistically speaking, as many as *one in three girls* and *one in five boys* will experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16. Typical sex offenders who molest children share certain common traits, listed below. An offender:

- can be a child, adolescent, or adult.
- is usually someone you and your child know and like.
- can be a man or a woman, married or single.
- can be of any race, hold any religious belief, and have any sexual preference.
- can be a parent, stepparent, relative, family, friend, teacher, clergyman, babysitter, coach, or student—anyone who comes in contact with your children.
- is likely to be a stable, employed, and respected member of the community.

An offender's age, education, and intelligence **do not** prevent him or her from molesting your child.

#### **How can I listen and talk with children about child sexual abuse?**

Perhaps the best way to prevent child sexual abuse is for parents to communicate with their children. This is also a responsibility for other adults who have contact with children or adolescents. You may want to:

- Talk to children and take time to listen and observe. Learn as many details as you can about their activities and feelings. Encourage them to share concerns and problems with you.

- Explain that their bodies belong only to them and that they should tell you if someone tries to touch them in their private places (**private places** are any areas that are normally covered by a bathing suit).
- Tell children that some people may try tell, show or make them do things they do not feel comfortable doing. Tell them if they can, to say no, get away, and go tell a trusted adult. They can keep telling until they get the help that they need. Help your children identify trusted adults that they can talk to.
- Explain the difference between surprises and secrets. Sex offenders who abuse children manipulate their victims to keep the sexual activity a secret.
- Be aware that people a child may know, trust, and love, like a parent, relative, babysitter, or even a student, teacher, coach, or member of the clergy, might try to harm them sexually.
- Make sure children know that if someone does something confusing to them, or if they have seen something that disturbs them, you want to know about it. Reassure them and explain that they will not be blamed for whatever has happened.
- Try not to scare children. Keep in mind, that the majority of people never do this and that most adults are deeply concerned about protecting children from harm.
- When talking about personal safety with a child, you may be reminded of experiences you have had. There is help available if you want to talk to someone about it.

### **Are there physical or behavioral signs to watch for?**

Note: An indicator list is not a guarantee that abuse has occurred. Rather it is a list of “red flags” which require adults to be more observant and to connect with other adults to increase awareness with knowledge.

Children who may be too frightened to talk about sexual molestation may give no indication of it or may exhibit a variety of physical and behavioral signs. Any or several of these signs may be significant; they may also suggest problems other than sexual abuse. Adults should be alert to such symptoms, including:

- extreme changes in behavior, such as loss of appetite.
- fear of the dark or sleep disturbances—nightmares, bed-wetting, fear of sleeping alone, or loss of sleep.
- regression to more infantile behavior such as thumb-sucking or excessive crying.
- expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child of that age.
- unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters, or excessive masturbation.

- vaginal or rectal bleeding, pain, itching, swollen genitals, vaginal discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases.
- fear or intense dislike of a particular person, or being left in a particular place.
- change in school patterns; specifically, reduced attendance, inability to concentrate, excessive daydreaming, sudden changes in grades.
- teenage pregnancy or prostitution.
- suicide attempts
- alcohol or drug use.
- other behavioral signals, such as aggressive or disruptive behavior, withdrawal, running away, or delinquent behavior.

### **What should I do if I think child sexual abuse has occurred?**

- Believe the child. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse.
- Praise the child for talking to you about the experience.
- Show your support for the child. Children's greatest fear is that they are at fault and responsible for the incident. Reinforce the fact that the child is not at fault.
- Remain calm. Recognize that your attitude and acceptance are important signals to the child.
- Report the abuse. You can call Child Protective Services (CPS), a state or local police department, or the local information hotline. Reporting is especially important for the protection of your children and other children.
- Get help. Contact your community clinic, hospital emergency room or doctor, sexual assault crisis service, or social service agency to assist you.
- Do not blame yourself. Sexual abuse is a fact in our society. Many abusers choose work or community activities that give them access to children. Most abuse occurs in situations where children know and trust the abuser.
- Reporting may prevent further incidents.

### **What will happen then?**

A social worker from CPS and/or a police officer will contact you about the report. He or she will talk to you and your child and ask questions about what happened. Depending on the circumstances, you may be asked to have your child examined by a physician if you have not already done so. The advocate may refer you to available services to help you and your child, and will continue to assist and support you if necessary.

Remember that child sexual abuse is an individual and community problem. It can be overcome. We must work together to protect and support our children.

## LIST OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES ON LAWS AND INFORMATION SOURCES REGARDING SEX OFFENDERS

Where can I find more information?

### STATE

- Official State Government Website <http://access.wa.gov/>
- Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs:  
<HTTP://WWW.WCSAP.ORG/HELP.HTM>
- Washington Department of Corrections: <http://www.doc.wa.gov/>
  - Offender Transition: <http://www.doc.wa.gov/cpu/>
- Washington Juvenile Rehabilitation Association (JRA):  
<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/jra/>
  - Juvenile Sex Offender Treatment:  
<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/jra/SOTreatment.shtml>
- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs:  
<http://www.waspc.org/index.php>
  - WASPC's Sex Offender Information Center: <http://ml.waspc.org/>
- Health Profession Quality Assurance (can be used to check if licensed practitioner has had license suspended or revoked due to sex offense):  
[https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/hpqa1/Application/Credential\\_Search/profile.asp](https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/hpqa1/Application/Credential_Search/profile.asp)

### LOCAL

- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC): <http://www.kcsarc.org/>
  - KSARC's Education And Prevention Department 425.226.5062
  - KCSARC's 24-Hour Sexual Assault Resource Line 1.888.99.VOICE
  - General Sex Offender Information:  
[http://www.kcsarc.org/sex\\_offenders\\_safety.htm](http://www.kcsarc.org/sex_offenders_safety.htm)

- King County Sheriff's Office <http://www.metrokc.gov/sheriff/>
- Seattle Police Department's Sex Offender Website <http://www.seattle.gov/police>

## **FEDERAL**

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):  
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa>
- Center for Sex Offender Management: <http://www.csom.org/>

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Training for School Staff on Juvenile Sex and Kidnapping Offenders: Legislative Report – House Bill 2101:  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/InstitutionalEd/pubdocs/FinalTaskForceReportHB2101.pdf>
- Notification to Schools of Registered Juvenile Sex or Kidnapping Offenders: Legislative Report – Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6580:  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/InstitutionalEd/pubdocs/FinalTaskForceReportHB2101.pdf>

## **LEGISLATION**

- Senate Bill 6580:  
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6580&year=2005>
- House Bill 2101:  
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2101&year=2005>