



Ed and Nancy Hanenburg
Children's
Advocacy Center
abuse prevention & intervention

At the Ed and Nancy Hanenburg Children's Advocacy Center we are seeing a tremendous decline in the cases of child sexual abuse being reported. Since the onset of COVID-19, referrals are down 70% from this same time last year. Unfortunately, we know child sexual abuse is continuing to happen and children are isolated more than ever from mandated reporters. Currently, the types of cases being reported are grouped into three main categories: kids who were being abused and now because of the order to stay home have had some time away from their abuser and are making the disclosure, kids who have been abused online and their parents have found evidence of this by looking at their technology, and children who are being babysat by older children in the home while parents are at work.

What can you do to be proactive in preventing sexual abuse during this time?

Step 1. Learn the Facts

- Know what abuse is. Child sexual abuse is any act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other
- 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused BEFORE their 18th birthday
- 35% of child victims are 11 years old or younger
- 90% of children who are victims of sexual abuse KNOW THEIR ABUSER

Step 2. Minimize Opportunity

- 80% or more of child sexual abuse incidents happen in isolated, one-on-one situations
- Make sure interactions can be observed and interrupted
- Remember that older youth should not be in isolated, one-on-one situations in youth-serving settings
- Choose group situations and have multiple adults supervise whenever possible

Step 3. Talk About It

- Have age-appropriate, open conversations about our bodies, sex and boundaries
- Talk with children when they are young and use proper names for body parts
- Tell children to trust gut feelings
- Explain to children that secrets can be harmful. If someone asks them to keep a secret, they should tell you about it
- Speak and listen calmly. It's important that the child feels safe and loved in all of these discussions

Step 4. Recognize the Signs

- Anxiety, chronic stomach pain, or headache
- Too perfect behavior, withdrawal, fear, depression, unexplained anger
- Sexual behavior and language that are not appropriate are red flags
- Use of alcohol or drugs can a young age can be a sign

Step 5. React Responsibly

- If a child discloses sexual abuse, you discover sexual abuse or you have a reason to suspect it, you NEED TO REPORT
- Listen calmly and openly
- Don't ask leading questions, "Tell me more about that" or "What happened next" are questions to ask
- SAY, "I believe you and it's not your fault", "I am the adult and it's my job to protect you"
- Don't promise that the information will be kept confidential
- Call 1.855.444.3911 and file a 3200 report

During COVID-19 the Children's Advocacy Center continues to provide essential services on-site for children who disclose sexual abuse and need to be forensically interviewed. Other support services such as counseling, court advocacy, and prevention are all being provided remotely.

For more information, please visit cac-ottawa.org or call 616-393-6123.

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