

Sexual Abuse of Children: **What Every Adult Should Know**

(Information from Family & Children's Services of Baltimore, MD)

It takes courage for a child to report sexual abuse. Make it easier for the child by believing him or her.

In 99% of cases where children report abuse, they are telling the truth.

In 90% of nationally reported cases, the abuser was someone known to the child.

Warn children about strangers, but help them to understand that even friends and neighbors should not touch them in certain ways.

Let children know that they have a right to get away from anyone who is trying to touch them in inappropriate ways. Make it clear to them that it is the adult, not the child, who is in the wrong.

If a child indicates abuse, report it to your local department of social services or police department, or call the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-392-3738).

Seek professional help.

The abuser needs help, too. There are programs available to help abusers.

Sexual abuse is a problem to be solved, not avoided.

Why a Child Might Not Talk about Sexual Abuse

It is hard enough for an adult to talk about sexual abuse. For a child, it's even harder. Some of the reasons are listed below.

1. The child is physically, financially, or emotionally dependent on the abuser.
2. The abuser has threatened the child's safety or that of the family.
3. The child blames himself for what happened.
4. The child has been taught that adults are right, and assumes responsibility for the abuse.
5. The child fears that no one will believe him or her because often the abuser is a familiar adult.
6. The child believes sexual issues should not be discussed.
7. The child does not have words to explain what happened.
8. The abuser says the parents will no longer love the child if the abuse is revealed.

ALWAYS BELIEVE A CHILD!