

What Parents Should Know:

- Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse regardless of cultural background or income level.
- Children need to feel loved, valued, and protected.
- Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well-being.
- Often there are no physical signs of sexual abuse.
- Many cases of a child sexual abuse go unreported, because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.
- The offender may have threatened to hurt a family member, or the child feels that she or he is to blame for the abuse.
- It is important to show interest in your child's activities; let her/him know that you are available to talk and listen; allow your child to share thoughts and feelings with you.
- The child is never to blame for the abuse; children cannot prevent abuse, only the offender can.
- Studies suggest the personal safety rules can be taught and understood by children age 3 and up.
- There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse; more common is a child denying that abuse happened when it did.

For help or to learn more:

Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault
(601) 948-0555

Jackson Rape Crisis Center
(601) 948-4495

Child Abuse Hotline
(800) 222-8000

MS Children's Advocacy Center
(601) 969-7111

Pediatric Forensic Exam Clinic
(601) 929-1719

Or call toll-free: (888) 987-9011

You will be connected to the nearest sexual assault crisis service.

Each center can provide:

- 24 hour crisis services
- information and referral
- advocacy for children and non-abusing parent with police and court counseling
- support groups and more

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A guide for parents
to teach their children
personal safety rules
to reduce the
risk of sexual abuse.

MISSISSIPPI COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT



P. O. Box 4172
Jackson, MS 39296

(601) 948-0555
(888) 987-9011

www.msCasa.org

Sexual Abuse includes:

- fondling or touching the child's private parts or forcing the child to touch another's private part
- exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic materials
- having children perform in pornographic movies or pose for pornographic materials
- sexual intercourse

Statistics:

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted before age 18.
- 85% of child sexual abuse is committed by relatives, close family friends, or an adult that the child knows and trusts.
- the median age that girls and boys are sexually abused is 5-9 years old.
- In Mississippi, 90% of victims seen at sexual assault crisis services in 2003 were under the age of 18.

Teach your child these personal safety rules:

- the difference between safe and unsafe touches, what is appropriate physical affection?
- the proper names for all their private parts; many children are not able to tell about the abuse because they don't know the words to use.
- safety rules apply to all adults; not just strangers.
- their bodies belong to them and it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts.

- it is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable; no matter who the person is
- they should not keep secrets about touching, no matter what the person says; if someone touches them, tell and keep telling until someone listens!

Note:

You may want to include your conversation about personal safety rules when teaching your child about fire safety, bike safety, or traffic safety.

You should role-play the above rules (lessons) several times. Do not expect your child to memorize them.

Signs of possible abuse include:

These signs are possible indicators and do not necessarily mean sexual abuse has occurred.

- excessive clinging or crying
- sleep disturbances, nightmares
- fear of particular adults or places
- bed-wetting
- problems with school (refusal to attend or a drop in grades)
- depression, withdrawal from family and friends
- alcohol or drug use
- change in eating habits
- frequent touching private parts
- unexplained bleeding, pain, irritation of mouth or private parts
- any unexplained change in behavior or development of new behaviors

Ways to support your child if she or he has been abused:

- Believe your child.
- Reassure your child that her or his safety is important.
- Assure your child that she/he is not to blame for the abuse.
- Remember that how you respond to your child is critical to his or her ability to deal with the trauma of the abuse.
- Don't pressure your child to talk (or stop talking) about the abuse; allow your child to talk at her/his own pace.
- Get your child medical help.

Explain to your child what you need to do to help him or her:

- Get support for yourself; this is a very difficult issue for any parent to handle.
- Call your local sexual assault crisis center for assistance for your child and yourself.

As a parent:

Know where your children are, who they're with, and what they're doing?

Keeping children safe from sexual abuse is everyone's responsibility.