

# SARA HAS A SECRET

She is afraid to tell



Dove House Children's Advocacy Center

**She is being**

# **Sexually Abused**

- Child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity by an adult with a child.
- Children or adolescents can sexually abuse other children.
- Sexual abuse happens every day with little regard for social classes, racial or ethnic groups, religious affiliations, or sexual orientation.
- No reason exists that excuses or justifies sexualized behaviors involving a child.
- The effects of child sexual abuse may be severe and may last a lifetime.



# It's likely you know a child who has been or is being sexually abused.

Research Shows:

- One in every 10 children is sexually abused before the age of 18.
- Only 38% of children disclose that they have been sexually abused.
- Many children never tell that they have been sexually abused.
- Many children never exhibit any signs of being sexually abused.



# It's also likely that you know an abuser.

- The greatest risk is from people we know and trust, rarely strangers.
- Children are most often abused by family, friends, older or larger children, neighbors, coaches, and people we trust.



- Abusers seek professions that give them access to children.
- 70% of child sexual abusers have 1-9 victims, while 20% have 10-40 victims.
- Abusers do not look or act a certain way and are deliberate in their attempts to appear trustworthy so that they may gain access to children.

# Child Sexual Abuse Includes Touching and Non-Touching Behaviors

## **Touching behaviors may include:**

- Touching a child's genitals for sexual pleasure.
- Making a child touch the genitals of someone else.
- Inserting objects or body parts inside any part of a child's body for sexual pleasure.

## **Non-touching behaviors include:**

- Exposing a child to pornography and/or adult sexual activity in person.
- Showing a person's genitals to a child.
- Making/asking a child to perform sexual acts on another child.
- Enticing a child via social media, cell phone, or computer for sexual purposes.
- Taking photographs/video of a child for sexual purposes.
- Watching a child undress or use the bathroom with or without the child's knowledge.



# Recognize the Red Flags

**Some children never show any signs of being sexually abused.**

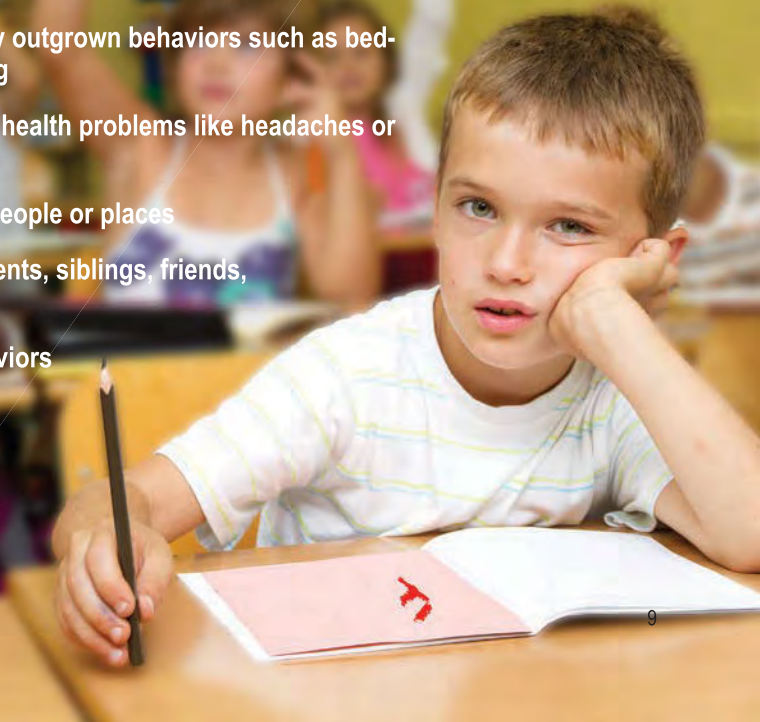
Children's reactions to sexual abuse depends on many factors including, but not limited to, the child's age at time of abuse, age at time of disclosure, support or lack thereof from caregivers & community, duration of the abuse, and availability of appropriate counseling.





Most victims do not display any physical evidence of their abuse. Below are some possible behavioral and emotional reactions often observed in child sexual abuse victims:

- Anxiety/ Withdrawal/ Depression
- Sleep disturbances including nightmares, night terrors, or not wanting to sleep in his/her own bed
- Self-destructive behaviors such as self- mutilation, risk taking behaviors, etc.
- Inappropriate age-related sexual knowledge or behaviors / promiscuity
- Regression to previously outgrown behaviors such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking
- Unexplained or frequent health problems like headaches or stomach aches
- Unusual fear of certain people or places
- Aggression towards parents, siblings, friends, pets
- Anger / Acting Out Behaviors
- Changes in school performance or behavior
- Substance abuse
- Change in eating habits



# Why Children are Afraid to Tell

**There are many fears that prevent children from disclosing including:**

- they will not be believed
- they or their family will be in trouble
- they will lose people important to them
- other people will be mad at them
- they will be taken away from home
- they are ashamed
- they don't know how to tell
- they are confused about what happened
- they think it happens in every home
- they blame themselves
- they fear they will be stigmatized
- they and/or the family is dependent on the abuser
- threats from the abuser





**minimize THE CHANCES OF ABUSE**

Educate Yourself About Child Sexual Abuse  
Set and Respect Body & Privacy Boundaries  
Monitor Children's Internet Usage  
Talk Openly with Your Children



# Educate Yourself About Child Sexual Abuse

- Abusers seek to gain our trust so that they may gain time alone with our children.
- To best protect our children, eliminate or reduce isolated, one-on-one situations between children and adults, and children and other youth.
- Do not expect your child to take responsibility for fending off sexual advances by an adult.
- Adults are tasked with preventing, recognizing, and reacting responsibly to child sexual abuse.





# Set & Respect Body & Privacy Boundaries :

- Teach your children about their right to privacy with their body and model those boundaries for your children.
- Give your child permission to say “no” to tickling, hugging, kissing or anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and teach them that their “no” will be respected.
- Allow your child to choose a different way to demonstrate love such as a hand shake or high five.







- Teach your children about their bodies using the proper names for body parts.
- Educate your children about okay touch versus inappropriate touch.
- Teach your child that their private parts are private.
- Explain to your child that they should not touch someone else's private parts.

**private parts = anything a bathing suit covers**

# Monitor Children's Internet and Cell Phone Usage

- 1 in 5 children are solicited sexually while on the Internet.
- Teach your children to think carefully before posting any identifying info online such as their full name, address, phone number, school, birth date, physical location, or personal photos.
- Set parental controls in line with your child's age and maturity level and review the privacy settings often.
- Teach your child about cyber-bullying and sexual predators online.
- Monitor your child's cell phone usage, text messages, and photo exchanges.



# Secrets are bad.

**Teach your child the difference between a secret and a surprise.**

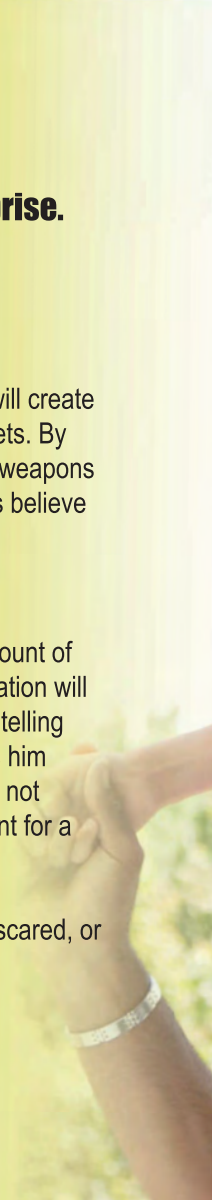
## **Secrets:**

Secrets are bad because they exclude others, often because the information will create anger or upset someone. Sometimes unsafe people ask children to keep secrets. By teaching your child not to keep secrets, you are eliminating one of the biggest weapons that abusers use against our children. Explain to your child that you will always believe them and there is no information that they cannot share with you.

## **Surprises:**

Sometimes there is information that needs to be kept a surprise for a short amount of time. This information will not create anger or upset others. Rather, this information will make others happy when they learn about it. One example of a surprise is not telling dad about an upcoming party that mom is throwing for him because she wants him to be surprised. When dad learns of the party, he will be happy because this is not information that will hurt or anger him. Other examples may be buying a present for a friend and not telling her about it until she opens it.

Give your child permission to tell anyone they trust if they feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused by someone's behavior.





# React Responsibly

## If a child gains the courage to disclose sexual abuse to you:

- Listen calmly and openly.
- Don't fill in the gaps or lead the child.
- Believe the child.
- Tell the child he/she has done nothing wrong.
- Affirm the child's courage.
- Seek the help of a professional who is trained to talk with the child about sexual abuse.
- Don't confront the suspect.
- Report anything you know or suspect might be sexual abuse.

**If you believe that a child has been abused, please report it today to either your local law enforcement agency or Department of Social Services.**

**Iredell County DSS  
Alexander County DSS**

**704-873-5631  
828-632-1080**

**For more information on reporting child abuse  
visit our website at [www.dovehousecac.org](http://www.dovehousecac.org).**





# Dove House

## CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

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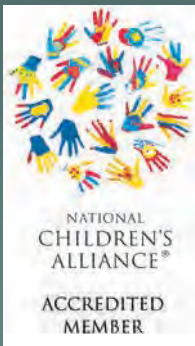
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by Dove House  
Employees  
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Accredited since  
2005 by the National  
Children's Alliance

### Sources:

Stop It Now!  
[www.stopitnow.org/](http://www.stopitnow.org/)

Darkness 2 Light  
[www.d2l.org/](http://www.d2l.org/)

The Children's  
Assessment Center  
<http://cachouston.org/>

All models used for illustrative purposes - not actual victims