

## 1. Learn the Facts

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one uses power over the other.

Child abusers often go out of their way to appear trustworthy to gain access to your child, and in many cases of abuse, children and/or families know the abuser. The majority of time, the abuser is someone the child likes, loves or lives with.

## 2. Minimize Opportunity

More than 80% of sexual abuse instances occur in isolated one-adult/one-child situations.

What can I do to reduce risk and protect my child?

- Create a group situation.
- Have multiple adults supervise.
- Make it observable.
- Plan for someone to drop in or interrupt.




**A child's  
safety is an  
adult's job.**

## 3. Talk About It

Have age-appropriate conversations about our bodies, sex and boundaries. Abusers target children who are not able to talk about their body parts or do not have knowledge about what sex is.

Talk with your child openly and often.



**“No one should  
ever touch you  
where a bathing  
suit covers.”**

**“Your whole body  
is a private**

- Use proper names for body parts, such as “Vagina”, “Penis” and “Breasts.”
- Model caring for your own body and teach children how to care for theirs.
- Let children know that they have the right to make decisions about their bodies.
- Educate children that secrets can be harmful. If someone asks them to keep a secret, they should tell you or another trusted adult about it.
- Give them permission to say “no” if they do not want to touch others, or to be touched.
- Teach your child that it is “against the rules” for adults or other children to act in a sexual way with them and use examples.
- Review safety and touching boundaries anytime a child is in a new situation.

## 4. Recognize the Signs

Some child sexual behaviors indicate more than harmless curiosity and are considered behavior problems. These behaviors may pose a risk to the safety and well-being of the child and other children:

- Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, although redness, rashes/swelling in the genital area, urinary tract infections, chronic stomach pain or headaches, may occur.
- Emotional signals are more common. From "too perfect" behavior, to withdrawal and depression, to unexplained anger and rebellion.
- Sexual behavior and language that are not age-appropriate can be a red flag.
- Some children may have no signs whatsoever.

## 5. React Responsibly

Understand how to respond to risky behaviors and suspicions or reports of sexual abuse.

**Missouri Child  
Abuse and  
Neglect 24 Hour  
Hotline: 1-800-  
392-3738**

If you suspect a child is being sexually abused call the Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 24 hour hotline 1-800-392-3738. If a child tells you he or she has been sexually abused, remain calm, tell them you believe them, and avoid asking multiple questions and call Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. In case of emergency call 911.

### Presenting the Parenting Resource Guide to Families:

- Child sexual abuse is a difficult subject. Use the Community Resource sheet to locate local organizations that can help.
- Notify the family that you are a mandated reporter and if you suspect or witness child abuse you are legally and ethically required to contact the Missouri Children's Division.
- Create a safe environment for yourself. During the session, if you become uncomfortable redirect the discussion to another educational topic and consult with supervisor.

