

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

IF SEXUAL ABUSE HAS OCCURRED OR IS SUSPECTED

- ▶ Stay calm – don't panic or overreact.
- ▶ Allow the child to talk.
- ▶ Believe them.
- ▶ Assure the child that they are not to blame for what happened.
- ▶ Let them know it was brave to tell someone.
- ▶ Let the child know you are glad they told someone.
- ▶ Encourage a medical exam, even if there are no visible injuries.
- ▶ Consider connecting the child with a counselor who can provide therapeutic support.
- ▶ Utilize your local rape crisis center for support for parents and other family members.

REPORT

Make a report of suspected abuse and neglect to the WVDHHR hotline at 1-800-352-6513 and to local law enforcement.

CALL US

SOMEONE IS WAITING TO LISTEN AND HELP

CONTACT THE RAPE CRISIS CENTER HOTLINE IN YOUR AREA

Advocating a Way for Adults & Youth

Beckley: 304-255-2559 / 1-888-825-7836

Centers Against Violence

Elkins: 304-636-8433 / 1-800-339-1185

CONTACT Huntington

Huntington: 304-399-1111 / 1-866-399-7273

Eastern Panhandle Empowerment Center

Martinsburg: 304-263-8292

Family Crisis Center

Keyser: 1-800-698-1240

Family Crisis Intervention Center

Parkersburg: 304-428-2333 / 1-800-794-2335

Family Refuge Center

Lewisburg: 304-645-6334

HOPE, Inc.

Fairmont: 304-367-1100

Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center

Morgantown: 304-292-5100

REACH – The Counseling Connection

Charleston: 304-340-3676

Sexual Assault Help Center

Wheeling: 1-800-884-7242

Stop Abusive Family Environments

Welch: 1-800-688-6157

OR

THE NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE

1-800-656-HOPE



West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services, Inc.

www.fris.org

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

RECOGNIZE

signs of sexual abuse

RESPOND

to disclosures of abuse

REPORT

suspected abuse

West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services, Inc.



This project was supported by Grant #2019-SW-AX-0018 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

What Adults Can Do

RECOGNIZE signs of sexual abuse and understand the facts. Know how to **RESPOND** — what to do and say — if sexual abuse happens, and **REPORT** it.

RECOGNIZE Common Emotional Reactions

- FEAR**
- ▶ of the abuser
 - ▶ of getting in trouble or getting a loved one in trouble
 - ▶ of not being believed

- GUILT**
- ▶ for not being able to stop the abuse
 - ▶ for believing they “consented” to the abuse
 - ▶ for telling
 - ▶ for keeping it a secret
 - ▶ about being abused
 - ▶ about their body’s reactions

- SHAME**
- ▶ because of their changing emotions
 - ▶ because they may still love the abuser

- CONFUSION**
- ▶ at the abuser
 - ▶ at other adults who failed to protect them
 - ▶ at themselves

- ANGER**
- ▶ at being betrayed by someone they trusted

- SADNESS**
- ▶ because they have trouble talking about the abuse

- ISOLATION**
- ▶ because they feel alone



Learn more about the **It's On Us WV** initiative, tips for talking to children and youth, and ways to prevent child sexual abuse.

What is child sexual abuse?

Any sexual act with a child (a person under 18 years of age, not emancipated) by another person that may or may not involve touching, often with the purpose of sexual gratification. It does not matter if force, deception, bribery, threats or pressure is used, or if the child understands the sexual nature of the act. Children cannot give consent in these situations.

Examples of sexual abuse include:

- ▶ Having sexual intercourse with a child
- ▶ Performing oral sex on a child
- ▶ Making a child perform oral sex
- ▶ Touching or asking to see a child’s sex organs
- ▶ Making a child touch or look at another person’s private parts
- ▶ Using a child as a sex worker
- ▶ Showing pornography to a child
- ▶ Taking pornographic photos of a child
- ▶ Sexting with a child

About 1 in 10 children in the U.S. experience contact sexual abuse. (Townsend, C., & Rheingold, A.A., 2013)

Most child victims know their abuser.

Abusers may be family members, family friends and other trusted individuals.

RECOGNIZE Signs of Possible Child Sexual Abuse

- ▶ Physical complaints
- ▶ Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- ▶ Excessive clinging or crying
- ▶ Bed wetting
- ▶ Fear or dislike of particular adults or places
- ▶ School problems
- ▶ Withdrawal from family, friends or usual activities
- ▶ Frequent touching of private parts
- ▶ Sexual behavior inappropriate to child’s age
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Drug or alcohol problems
- ▶ Hostility or aggression
- ▶ Running away
- ▶ Sexually transmitted diseases
- ▶ Physical symptoms involving genital, anal or mouth areas
- ▶ Any dramatic changes in behavior, eating and/or development of new behaviors

Talk About Safety

Talk openly with children under your care about personal safety. Teach them proper names for sexual body parts, so they have the words to talk about abuse if it occurs. Teach them about safe and unsafe touches, and appropriate physical affection. Establish simple personal safety rules with them, that apply to people they know as well as to strangers.

Examples of safety rules:

- ▶ It’s okay to say “no” to touches or behaviors that make you uncomfortable.
- ▶ Never keep secrets about touching.
- ▶ It’s NEVER your fault if someone sexually abuses you.
- ▶ Tell a safe adult if someone makes you feel uncomfortable.