

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: RECOGNIZING, RESPONDING, REPORTING

## Learn The Facts

Sexual abuse is any act of sexual molestation or exploitation of a child committed by an adult or an older child that has permanent, temporary, or supervisory responsibilities of that child, or by any household or family member. Sexual abuse includes actual or attempted rape, incest, oral sex, intercourse, sodomy, fondling, and sex trafficking, as well as non-touching behaviors such as sexting, use of sexually explicit language, exposure to pornography, and voyeurism. Children are under the age of 18. Consent is not a defense

- 90% of abusers are someone the child or family knows. These are crimes committed unfortunately by trusted adults.
- Only one in ten children who are sexually abused ever tell anyone.
- One in four girls and one in six boys will experience sexual abuse before they reach age 18.
- Sexual abuse does not discriminate by race or socioeconomic background.
- Without receiving help, children who have been abused are more likely to have increased health risks later in life, as well as increased risk of future violence, depression, and substance abuse.

## Know The Signs

Signs of abuse can be subtle or overwhelming and physical signs may not be present. Know what to look for. Be aware that the child may not show all the signs or any signs at all. These signs may be indicative of other issues as well. Trust your instinct. Suspicion of abuse is enough of a reason to take action.

- Change in child's behavior, personality, or activities
- Stated desire not to be around a particular adult
- Aggression toward adults or other children
- Sudden decline in school performance
- Sexualized play or has a sexual knowledge beyond normal maturity
- Avoidance of undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes
- Swelling or bleeding around genitals or mouth
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted diseases come from sexual contact and not dirty bathrooms or washcloths.

## Report Abuse

Under Maryland law, any person who has reason to believe a child has been subjected to abuse must report the suspected abuse to authorities, even if the potential victim is now over 18 years old, as other children may still be at risk. Reporting does not require proof that abuse or neglect has occurred.

If you suspect that a child has been abused, contact your local Child Protective Services or police as soon as possible. Those agencies and BCAC will investigate the report to determine if the allegations can be substantiated as child abuse or neglect and will arrange for appropriate services needed to prevent further maltreatment of the child and to preserve the family unit. BCAC works closely with local authorities to help provide these types of services.

By law, certain professionals are required to report child abuse as soon as possible.

### Facts about reporting

- You can report confidentially and anonymously
- Investigations cannot be done nor can services be provided, unless a report is made
- Reporting gives children a voice
- Reporting allows children to get help, even if the allegations are not substantiated

### When making a report, you will need...

- Child's name, age, and home address
- Name and home address of child's parent or caregiver
- Current location of child
- Nature of allegations