



## WHAT PARENTS AND GUARDIANS SHOULD KNOW AND TEACH

- Let our children know that our job as a parent is to love them and protect them
- Teach children the proper words for their body parts; avoid using pet names
- Teach children what parts of their bodies others should not touch
- Talk to children about their bodies and about what abuse is (must be age appropriate)
- Teach children the difference between comfortable appropriate touch and uncomfortable / unacceptable touch
- Sibling incest is a serious issue that most of us are unaware of. Use opportunities to have conversation with all siblings regarding appropriate touch and uncomfortable / unacceptable touch
- Tell children that an abuser might be a family member, adult friend (trusted) or older youth
- Teach children that it is NOT OK for adults or older children to act or talk in an uncomfortable or inappropriate way with them and use examples e.g. “Cousin John Doe should not tell you your breasts look pretty” or “your at a friend’s house and an older brother wants to play a game that involves taking your clothes off”
- Help your child to practice healthy boundaries. “It’s OK if your child doesn’t want to kiss or hug a particular relative” and teach them another way to show respect
- Model comfortable touch by not **forcing** hugs, kisses, tickling and wrestling if the child protests
- If your child seems uncomfortable or resistant to being with a particular adult or relative, ask why
- Let your child know that if they are uncomfortable around a particular adult or older child then you or another adult will let that person know this. For example, “The child doesn’t feel comfortable sitting on your lap, he prefers to shake hands”

- Let your child know that no adult with good intentions would ask them to keep personal SECRETS from their parents, family or friends (excluding things like surprise birthday parties, Christmas gifts and the like)
- Let your child know that child abusers use tricks, bribes and threats to keep them from telling. Use examples “If you tell, I will hurt your family”
- Although we teach our children to respect their elders, let your child know that he / she has the right to say NO and get away when an adult or older child is being inappropriate
- Ask your child on occasion “has anyone ever touched you inappropriately or asked you to touch them inappropriately?” – Keep in mind that “No” doesn’t always mean “No”. You must ask because children typically don’t tell. (This must be done at an appropriate time and place)
- Let your child know you will always love them, believe them and protect them
- If a child knows they will be believed, safe and not be judged or ridiculed by revealing the SECRET it is much more likely they will reveal it
- Parents must be prepared for the answer as the abuser could be a relative, friend, or any other person of trust
- The way a victim’s family responds to the sexual abuse plays a crucial role in the victim’s recovery
- It is important that a child who has been sexually abused sees consequence and accountability bestowed on the perpetrator in order to heal
- A child who has been abused must get their power back
- To reveal the secret is short term pain and long term gain
- **Start early and talk often**