

# Child Abuse Recovery and Prevention

## What is Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse is any forced sexual activity, including

- Obscene phone calls, jokes, remarks
- Sexual threats, manipulation, harassment
- Masturbation, intercourse, anal penetration
- Exposing parts of the body
- Kissing, oral sex, fondling, molestation
- Penetration with objects
- Involving children in pornography

## Who are the Victims?

Any child can be a victim! Sexual abuse can happen to both boys and girls, of any age, in any neighborhood, in any part of the country; rich and poor children, all races and creeds, in Spokane, in your church, in your home.

## Who is the Offender?

- Frequently, a family member
- 75% are known to the family
- Most (not all) are male
- Often appears normal, respectable

## What Are Effects of Sexual Abuse?

The effects of childhood sexual abuse can be long lasting. It may result in:

- Depression [severe enough to have suicidal tendencies]
- Psychosomatic illness and somatic complaints
- Chemical abuse
- Marital relationship problems
- Repetitive, exploitive relationships
- Sexual problems: frigidity to compulsive
- Addictive problems, like eating disorders or spending
- Low self-esteem from shame and guilt

## Younger Children:

- Fear of being touched, certain places, being alone
- Regression to infantile behavior, bedwetting, soiling
- Excessive masturbation, sleep disturbance, hyper
- Clinging, whining, dissociation, agitation, irritability
- Frequent genital infections
- Explicit sexual knowledge, behavior, language

## What If You Learn a Child Has Been a Victim?

1. Try to stay calm. Your feelings of guilt, anger and hurt could harm the child.
2. Believe what the child has told you.
3. Tell the child you are sorry that it happened.
4. Reassure the child of your love; promise to protect the child.
5. Report the incident to the police or CPS.
6. Assure the child that the adult is to blame.
7. Consult a physician concerning medical needs.
8. Tell the child that telling you was the right choice.
9. Advocate for the child to not be re-traumatized.

## What Are Other Forms of Abuse?

Child abuse is mistreatment or neglect of a child by care providers resulting in injury or harm. Child abuse can be sexual, but also:

- **Physical** – shaking, beating; failure to provide the necessities of life
- **Emotional** – smothering, abandonment; failure to provide contact, space, power, protection, challenge and peace
- **Verbal** – yelling, name-calling; failure to provide words of love, promise, commitment

## Why Should I Get Involved?

Child abuse affects everyone. Child abuse is a social burden that can rob a little child of the ability to become the person God created, or to be a productive citizen, and the costs in government agency and insurance services to repair the damage impact every adult. Child abuse is a burden in the legal system, with nearly all criminals in prison admitting they were abuse victims.

The abused children cannot help themselves. The Golden Rule and Christian empathy make us want to do unto the least of these what we would want done for us if the situation was reversed. Justice also requires our intervention: Jesus warned it would be better for a millstone to be around your neck than to harm a child.

