

# ending offending together

all about child sexual abuse,  
the people who commit it  
and how to stop it.



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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

Information Centre

*Te Puna Whakamāhioranga*

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# Ending Offending Together

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child, youth  
and family



Multi Agency One Service  
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# introduction



This booklet presents a positive approach to preventing child sexual abuse. It promotes understanding of the problem and gives information about child sexual abuse and the people who commit it.

“Ending Offending Together” describes ways for adults to recognise abusive behaviour and take responsible action to protect children. Kids cannot stop sexual abuse by themselves. Children need everybody to be informed and ready to protect them before abuse happens.

Most of us find the thought of child sexual abuse extremely disturbing. It is often a difficult topic to think about and talk about. Sexual abusers count on us to be confused, to keep quiet and not to call for help.

By learning about how sexual abuse happens, how sexual abusers operate and what to do about it, we can help to keep children safe.

*A study of school students found that one in five girls and one in ten boys reported being touched sexually or made to do sexual things they didn't want to do.*

(Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003)

## What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

Children, both boys and girls, and even toddlers and babies, can be sexually abused. Child sexual abuse happens when someone older, stronger and more powerful or mature involves a child in some sort of activity for their own sexual pleasure. It does not always have to involve physical force or even touching.

### Touching abuse:

- Putting objects or body parts inside the genitals of a child
- Touching children's private parts for sexual pleasure
- Making a child masturbate themselves or someone else
- Oral sex
- Rape and sodomy
- Sexual intercourse
- Making a child play sexual games
- Other sexual acts

### Non-touching abuse:

- Sexual talk with a child for adult sexual pleasure
- Exposing genitals (also called 'flashing')
- Encouraging a child to play 'show me' or 'pants down' games
- Masturbating in front of a child
- Secretly spying on children who are undressing or naked (also called 'peeping')
- Taking photos or videos of children in sexual poses
- Showing pornography to a child
- Making a child watch or take part in sexual activity

## Common Signs That May Indicate Sexual Abuse

Children and young people respond in different ways to sexual abuse. Some abused children do not outwardly show any signs of distress while others may present with many symptoms. The typical signs listed below may occur as a result of sexual abuse but may also occur because of other reasons, e.g. when parents separate, the death of someone close to the child, bullying and teasing at school.

If a child has a number of the signs listed below you should begin asking questions or seek advice from someone expert in the area of childhood or adolescent problems. Don't jump to conclusions. Determining whether a child has been sexually abused can be very difficult in some cases, and is best left to people trained in this area.

### **Behavioural signs:**

- Emotional changes e.g. angry outbursts, sadness and crying, tantrums, insecurity and unhappiness
- Uncharacteristic anxieties, clinginess and unwillingness to separate from parent/s
- An older child going back to behaving like a younger child, like bed-wetting or thumb sucking
- Becoming withdrawn from peers and social activities
- Sleeping problems and frequent nightmares
- Changes in toileting
- Difficulties with concentration and a drop in school grades
- Behaviour problems at school e.g. defiance, poor concentration, disruptiveness

- Loss of appetite or overeating
- A change in self esteem and low self worth
- Developing fears of certain people and places
- Talking about having a secret that seems to worry them
- Sexual behaviours and language with other children, adults or toys that seem out of the ordinary
- Excessive masturbation
- Self-harming behaviours, e.g. hitting or cutting yourself
- Depression and suicidal thoughts / behaviours
- Aggressive behaviours, fighting and angry outbursts
- Running away and general withdrawal from people
- Loss of confidence
- Lying and stealing
- Lack of self care and taking unnecessary risks
- Feeling dirty and washing frequently
- Expressing disgust about intimacy and closeness
- Avoidance of touch
- Acting in sexually precocious ways including prostitution
- Alcohol and drug use
- Truancy
- Sexually abusive behaviours to others
- Cruelty to animals

### **Physical signs:**

- Unexplained bruises, redness, rashes or bleeding from the genitals, anus or mouth.
- Pain in the genital area, anus or mouth.
- Genital sores or milky fluids in the genital area.



- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Unexplained or persistent physical illness e.g. chronic headaches, stomach aches.

If you said, "yes" to any of these physical signs it is important to see a doctor or call one of the numbers at the back of the book.

Sexual abuse hurts children physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. The effects of sexual abuse can go on for years, often lasting into adulthood.

## Why Don't Children Tell About Child Sexual Abuse?

Many children are unable to tell about being sexually abused. Unfortunately, silence enables sexual abuse to continue and this protects sexual offenders from being caught. Some of the reasons that prevent children from telling include:

- Being too young or not having the words to describe unfamiliar acts
- Being threatened or bribed by the abuser to keep the abuse a secret
- Being afraid that no one will believe them
- Blaming themselves or believing the abuse is punishment for being "bad"
- Feeling too ashamed or embarrassed to tell
- Feeling confused by the attention
- Having mixed feelings about the abuse
- Worrying about getting into trouble or getting a loved one into trouble
- Fear of breaking up the family.

## Who Sexually Abuses Children?

- Children can be sexually abused by anyone - they may be male or female, an adult or a teenager. Sometimes children are molested by other children.
- Child sexual abusers come from all backgrounds, racial groups, income groups and can be from any sexual orientation.
- Child sexual abusers are likely to be people we know, and could even be people we care about. It would be easy to figure out who they were if they were like the ones we see on TV – those strangers in trench coats hanging around the edges of playgrounds, or the "monster" who kills and mutilates children, but they're hardly ever like that.
- In most cases the child, or their family, knows and trusts the person who commits the abuse.

Recognising the behaviours of people who sexually abuse children is not easy; either because we do not know what to look for or because our suspicions are so disturbing that we push them from our minds.

## Child Sexual Abusers:

- May also be in sexual relationships with adults at the same time they are abusing children
- Are highly likely to deny the behaviour
- Are highly likely to be having sexual fantasies about children
- Are not addicted to having sex or sexual activity with children although they are unlikely to stop without help
- May also be interested in child pornography

## Teenagers who sexually abuse children

It has been estimated that more than half of all sexual offending is done by teenagers.

### Some important things to know about teenagers who sexually abuse children:

- They are not just experimenting with sex
- This is not behaviour that will just go away if you ignore it
- Teenagers who behave sexually towards younger children, or who are sexually abusive towards other teenagers need specialist help quickly
- Without help, some of these teenagers will go on to become adult child sex offenders.

#### Did you know?

- About 3/4 of sexual abusers start abusing before the age of 14 years
- About 1/3 of sexual abusers abuse both boys and girls
- About 1/3 of sexual abusers abuse both adults and children
- About 2/3 of sexual abusers abuse both children they know and children they don't know. (English et al., 2000)

## Why Do People Sexually Abuse Children?

There are many different reasons why people sexually abuse children. We do know that sexual abusers are sexually attracted to children. They want to abuse and they create opportunities so they can abuse. Many of them have had some kind of bad experience/ problem in their early childhood. Many have emotional and social

difficulties relating to adults. For this reason, adults who sexually abuse children can often spend more time with children than with adults. Less than half of those who sexually abuse a child have been sexually abused themselves.

Sexual abusers often minimise to themselves the impact on the children they abuse which makes it easier for them to continue abusing.

#### What is a paedophile?

A paedophile is a child abuser who is only sexually attracted to children. Most people who sexually abuse children are not paedophiles.

*Sexual abuse can happen in any family. 85% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child. Only 15% of sexual abuse occurs with a stranger. (Mullen et al., 1991)*

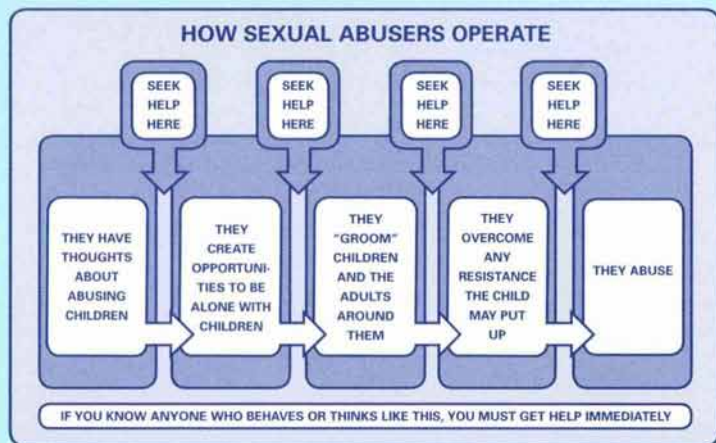
## How Do Child Sexual Abusers Operate?

Child sexual abusers say that they mostly abuse children who are the most vulnerable and the most available to them. Often it has very little to do with how physically attractive the child is to the abuser. They look for children who appear isolated, sad, or in need of a friend.

There are two things that will always be part of a child sexual abuser's routine: isolation and silencing children. Child sexual abusers will nearly always try to isolate a child from other adults. Child sexual abusers will always try to make the child keep the abuse a secret.



Sometimes children are abused by force and by threat, at other times abusers will befriend and charm children and the adults around them. This is called grooming.



### Grooming

Sexual abuse is not usually something that 'suddenly' happens. Most child sexual abusers spend some time thinking and fantasising about sexual acts with children. They plan carefully to create opportunities to be alone with children (e.g. taking them out for drives, camping or baby-sitting). The fact that abusers usually take their time can give well-informed parents, caregivers and children the chance to prevent abuse happening in the first place.

A big problem is that, most often, the ways in which someone starts to abuse a child doesn't look like abuse at all. Often sexual abusers will seem friendly, charming and nice. It often looks exactly like

good, caring childcare, but that is not the aim. The abuser's aim is to make sure everyone feels safe and trusts him/her. Appearing nice and caring helps the abuser because everyone will trust him/her and not be suspicious of their behaviour. If the abuser dressed or spoke or behaved in a scary way, people would be far more suspicious.

Due to the abuser's kind behaviour, the child may not appear scared or uncomfortable with him/her. The child may even appear to enjoy their time with the abuser because of the attention, kindness and caring he/she shows to the child.

### Grooming may take many forms. It may occur through:

- Favouring one child over others
- Bribing the child by buying them presents or giving them money
- Enticing the child away from protective adults (e.g. taking the child on outings without other adults and children)
- Taking an undue interest in the child's physical appearance
- Safe touching which becomes increasingly intimate and inappropriate
- Showing sexual pictures to the child
- Talking about sex with the child
- Repeatedly invading the child's privacy



Sometimes, grooming doesn't work for the abuser. Sometimes they will not abuse the first child they try to groom – they will find another more vulnerable child. At other times they may use force, threats and violence to abuse or keep the abuse a secret.

Sexual abusers don't abuse because they are drunk or stoned



## The influence of the internet

As well as grooming children face to face, some child abusers try to find and groom children using the Internet and mobile phone texting. Some abusers pose as children, or as concerned and caring adults in Internet chat rooms. These chat rooms allow abusers to make contact with children, groom them (sometimes several at one time) and to arrange meeting places with them.

*In a New Zealand study, 23% of 7-10 year olds and 37% of those aged 16 or older reported having had a face to face meeting with someone they met on the Internet. Only 20% of those who felt unsafe or threatened on the Internet reported telling a parent. (Internet Safety Group, [www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz))*

Another form of child sexual abuse that occurs through using the Internet is child pornography. There is a growing problem of downloading, trading and making child pornography using the Internet. Every piece of child pornography is a picture of a child being sexually abused. Those who watch or collect child pornography are participating in child sexual abuse. Research in NZ and overseas suggests that many of those who watch child pornography are likely to also have committed a sexual assault on a child.

For more information about how to protect children on-line, contact the Internet Safety Group listed at the back of this booklet.



*More than 20% of those caught trading in child pornography in NZ are teenagers. (Carr, 2004)*

## What Is Safe And Unsafe Behaviour For Adults Around Children?

**Most adult behaviour around children is safe. For example:**

- Respecting children's wishes about when and how they are touched; such as when a child says to stop tickling or play fighting because they have had enough
- Respecting children's privacy around things like bathing and dressing
- Adults being open to comments if their behaviour around children causes concern to others

However, there will be times when adult behaviour around children should cause you concern. Have you ever seen someone playing with a child and felt uncomfortable with it? Maybe you thought "I'm just over-reacting", or "he/she doesn't really mean that". Sometimes there will be nothing to worry about. At other times, you should worry. A time to be especially watchful is when there is a new adult in the household, e.g. Step-parent, boarder, babysitter, partner.

**Some adult behaviour around children is unsafe.**

Do you know an adult or teenager who:

- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection or attention?
- Asks lots of questions about the sexuality of a particular child or teenager, e.g. talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or intrudes on normal teenage dating?
- Creates opportunities to get time alone or **insists** on having time alone with a child or young teenager with little opportunity for

another person to interrupt or intervene?

- Spends most of his/her spare time with children or young teenagers and has little interest in spending time with someone his/her own age?
- Makes you feel 'shut-out' as a parent or isolates your child?
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free or takes children or young teenagers on overnight outings or holidays alone?
- Buys children or teenagers expensive gifts or food or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Allows children or teenagers to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviours?
- Repeatedly intrudes on a child's privacy by "accidentally" walking in on them in the toilet, in the bathroom, or when they are getting changed when it is not really necessary?
- Insists on having an older child sleep with him/her?
- Seems to demonstrate excessive control over a child, e.g. not letting the child make his/her own decisions or not letting the child be involved in activities outside of the home?
- Talks about inappropriate sexual behaviour with children or calls them sexual names, even if done in a joking manner?
- Visits children's chat rooms on the internet or collects or downloads pornography involving children?
- Nearly always wants their adult sexual partners to dress as a child or pretend they are a child during sex?

If you know someone who behaves in some of these ways, this person may have a problem. If you see these signs, talk to someone that can help, such as one of the agencies listed at the back of this book.

It may be difficult to confront someone you know or love who is talking or acting in sexually inappropriate ways around children. Perhaps you have tried talking to them but have been put off in some way. Many people with sexual behaviour problems wish that someone had asked them what was going on, or had told them where to call for help. They say it might have helped them stop. Many children who were being sexually abused have also wished someone had asked their abuser what they were doing at the time.

## What Stops Us Seeing Abuse?



Most children are sexually abused by someone close to them – often within their family. We don't usually want to imagine that anyone close, e.g. a spouse, partner, relative or friend, could do such a thing. Often parents assume that their children would tell them if they were being abused, or that they would be able to recognise a sexual abuser if they saw one. Sadly, as has already been mentioned in this booklet, child sexual abusers make it their business to hide their behaviour and make themselves seem safe.

Sometimes people might suspect something but dismiss the thought as too awful. They often tell themselves things like:

"He's so good with the children. There's no way he would hurt them."

"He's a happily married man. Why would he be interested in sex with boys?"

"She is their mother. Mothers don't do that sort of thing to their kids."



"I'd know if he was doing anything like that – I've been his wife for 20 years."

"He's only 14, just a kid himself. I fooled around like that at his age, too."

Don't be fooled – child sex offenders count on us to be unsuspecting and ignorant.



#### **What about after-school activities?**

Sometimes parents worry that their child might be at risk of sexual abuse at after school activities. Some things which can help minimise that risk include:

- Being present if your child's coach/teacher suggests additional individual lessons outside group lesson time
- Ensuring the coach/teacher allows parents to sit in on lessons, has an open door during lessons or a window in the door of the lesson room
- Watch for the coach/teacher unnecessarily touching your child if it is not relevant to the activity. The level of touching is different for different activities, e.g. Gymnastics or swimming compared to a piano lesson
- Being concerned if the coach/teacher makes any sexual comments or comments about your child's sexual development
- Checking with other parents who have attended after school activities with that coach/teacher
- Listening if your child is very unhappy about attending the lesson or makes remarks about not liking the coach/teacher without any real explanation.

## What If Someone You Know Has Sexually Abused A Child In Your Family?

If someone you know has sexually abused children in your family, you have a responsibility to make sure children are safe.

### What you can do:

- You could let the offender know that you are aware of their behaviour and have appropriate safety plans in place to help keep the children safe
- Insist that the abuser gets treatment (refer to the numbers at the back of the book)
- Get expert advice from that treatment provider about whether the abuser should have contact with children and who else should be told about the situation
- Get expert advice about the abuser's behaviour and the things that will increase risks to children's safety
- Educate children about how to keep themselves safe
- Make sure all the adults involved are informed about how to keep children safe
- You will need a family safety plan in place. A sex offender treatment programme will help you with this.

*In NZ around 95% of child sexual abusers who complete a specialist treatment programme do not go on to re-offend up to four years after treatment. (Lambie and Stewart, 2003)*

## Teenagers And Children Who Sexually Abuse Other Children

### Teenager's sexual behaviour:

Adolescence is a time when teenagers learn, understand and experiment with their sexuality and sexual feelings. Some typical teenage sexual behaviours may include:

- Consenting, same-age, sexual contact, including intercourse
- Sexual jokes or talk with peers
- General discussions about sexuality and different sexual experiences (usually between same-sexed peers)
- Showing off and comparing bodies
- Some interest in pornography
- Masturbation
- Sexual contact with someone of the same sex.

You may worry that some of the above behaviours are not in line with your own family values, religious beliefs and/or thinking about your own teenage child. However, they are 'typical' behaviours of a wide range of teenage children.

### Teenage sexual behaviour becomes abusive if:

- It involves children who are much younger
- It involves force, coercion, bribery or threats
- It is not consenting
- It involves the use of drugs and/or alcohol
- A teenager shows children pornography or other sexual material.



More than half of adult sexual offenders began offending in their teenage years (English et al., 2000), so it is essential to stop the behaviour as early as possible. Most teenagers can stop abusive behaviour if they receive specialist help while young.

Teenagers need to know that sexual experiences should not be hurtful or uncomfortable.

The legal age in New Zealand for sexual consent is 16 years of age.

### Teenagers need to know about healthy sex

- Good sex is honest, respectful, and consenting
- Set some sexual limits. It is useful to decide what you want from a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend (most teenagers are sexually assaulted by someone they know and trust)
- Practice being assertive about your personal limits
- It is never ok to force someone to have sex
- It is okay to change your mind about wanting to have sex at any time
- It is not okay to have sex with someone when they are too drunk or stoned to say no
- It is wise to think beforehand about what situations might arise that could be unsafe or out of your control
- Become aware of early warning signs that alert you to risky situations, e.g. someone who hassles you, or who keeps invading your space
- It is better to wait to have sex until it's really safe rather than take a risk
- In the end your friends will respect you more for standing up for your own beliefs and values than they will for giving in to peer pressure.

### Children's sexual behaviour:

Many children engage in sexual play during their childhood years. It is normal for children to touch their own bodies and sometimes those of other children. Games such as 'playing doctors and nurses' and 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' are very common.

#### WHEN TOUCHING PRIVATE PLACES IS GOOD AND OK AND WHEN IT IS WRONG AND MAKES PEOPLE UNHAPPY

**YES**



BETWEEN 2 ADULTS WHO LOVE AND CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER AND HAVE THE SAME AMOUNT OF POWER.

**NO**



NOT BETWEEN AN ADULT AND A CHILD BECAUSE THE ADULT HAS ALL THE POWER AND THE CHILD DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

**NO**



NOT BETWEEN A BIG KID AND A LITTLE KID BECAUSE THE BIG KID HAS ALL THE POWER.

**NO**



NOT BETWEEN KIDS BECAUSE IT IS TOO CONFUSING.

### Children involved in such games:

- Are usually of a similar age, size and developmental level
- Are not forced to play the games
- Will be light-hearted and not upset by the games

Sometimes children's sexual play/behaviour goes beyond normal limits. Generally, children's sexual behaviour is of concern if it occurs repeatedly, is out of balance with their other activities, and continues even when an adult intervenes. Sexual play between children is also considered inappropriate in some cultures.

### **Sexual behaviour between children is abusive if:**

- It hurts, frightens or upsets one, or both children
- One child has greater sexual knowledge than the other child
- One child uses force, threats, bribery or coercion in order to get the other child to participate
- One child forces another child to keep the behaviour a secret
- One child does not want to be involved
- One child is bigger, older and more developmentally advanced than the other child.

Children may behave in sexual ways because they have been sexually abused, have witnessed sexual behaviour, or have experienced other emotional difficulties. Very often children are confused by what they have experienced and do not understand what is appropriate behaviour.

While their behaviour is abusive, these children should not be regarded in the same way we regard adults who sexually abuse. These children need specialised education and guidance.

### **What to do if you're worried**

If you have concerns your teenager or child is sexually abusing other children you can take the following steps:

- Stay calm and open minded. Punishment and anger will not help. If your child sees you upset and angry, then s/he will not talk about it
- Do not jump to conclusions. Check if it is normal behaviour and do not ignore concerning behaviours

- Don't assume that the behaviour will go away by itself or that your child will "grow out of it"
- Seek support and help about these issues from specialist agencies in your community
- Ensure your child or teenager is supervised around other children until you have talked to a specialist in this area
- Ask for advice about whether other people need to be told
- Get help to deal with your own feelings so you can remain supportive to your child.

## **What To Teach Your Children**

Children of any age can be taught personal safety skills in the same way that we teach them about water safety, fire safety, traffic safety, and stranger danger. Sexual abusers rely on children to feel powerless, vulnerable and confused. Abusers are less likely to abuse children who are assertive, confident and informed.

### **Personal safety skills**

#### **Feelings**

Take special care to help your children learn and understand their emotions. Feelings are like 'inside warning bells' that can help children to work out when something is 'not right'. If children are able to recognise, and act on their uncomfortable feelings and tell someone about it, they are less likely to get harmed.





### Children learn from you:

Children learn from and copy the adults they are close to. If children see their parents valuing themselves, their bodies, and being strong, assertive and confident in their relationships with other people, then they will copy this behaviour and do the same.

### Body ownership

All children need to know and be able to say "I am the boss of my body". They need to feel good about their bodies and have some control over who touches them and how they are touched.

### Private body places are private

Teach your children the proper names for the private parts of their bodies and help them understand why these parts are kept private. Modelling this in your family is the best way to teach this to children.

#### Touching rules for children

- ✓ I will not touch other people's private parts
- ✓ I will not let anyone touch my private parts except for someone like the doctor or if I have a hurt place
- ✓ I will only touch my private parts in private
- ✓ If someone tries to get me to touch them or wants to touch me I'll say "No! Go away, I'm telling"
- ✓ If someone touches me in a yukky, unsafe way then I will tell a safe person about what happened.



### Good and bad touching

Teach children the difference between good touches and bad touches and help them see how each of these touches makes a person feel.

#### For example:

*"Good touches" make me feel happy, safe and loved (like hugs with the people I love, cuddling the cat, High Fives etc.)*

*"Bad touches" make me feel unhappy, hurt and yukky (like tickles that won't stop, pinches, getting hit or kicked, and touches on my private places.)*

### Secrets

Secrets can be good or bad. Good secrets make children feel happy - like birthday surprises and presents. Bad secrets make children feel unhappy and worried or are about things that might get them or someone else in trouble. Teach children that they should never keep a bad secret. Make sure that children understand they will not get into trouble if they tell a good or a bad secret.

### Safe people

Children need to know that not all adults are safe and trustworthy people. They also need to know that if a person or situation makes them feel uncomfortable or scared, then they may really not be safe. Help your children to identify the safe people in their world. Safe people are the people you trust and go to when you are worried or scared, especially in an emergency.

### Obeying adults

Children should know that they do not have to obey an adult or an older person who gives them unsafe feelings, hurts or frightens them. Tell children that it is OK to be impolite in order to keep themselves safe, and reassure them that they will not get into trouble, and that you will not be angry, if they do so.

### Open communication

Develop a relationship with your child that is based on open communication. Your child needs to feel safe and comfortable talking openly with you about anything, and know that you will not get angry.

Some community agencies provide 'keeping safe' education for children. It is also available through the "Keeping Ourselves Safe" programmes in some schools.

#### The "No, Go, Tell Rule"

This is a simple plan to teach your children.

Tell your children that if they get an uncomfortable feeling about someone who asks them to do something they don't like then:

- Say **NO, I'M TELLING** in a loud voice
- **GO AWAY** from this person
- **TELL A SAFE** adult about what happened



### Do a 'Keeping Ourselves Safe' programme

'Keeping Ourselves Safe' is an excellent abuse prevention programme taught by the Police at schools throughout NZ. KOS provides children and young people of all school ages with the knowledge and skills to recognise and deal with abuse. KOS also includes information for parents and caregivers. Ask your school to arrange a programme. There's more information at: <http://www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/resources/>

## What To Do If Your Child Tells About Being Sexually Abused

- Listen and let your child know you believe them
- Say that you are glad that she/he told you
- Say you are sorry that it happened
- Tell the child it is not his/her fault
- Tell him/her that there are people who you will need to talk to in order to get help
- Seek professional advice
- Find out if the child is safe from further abuse
- If a child is at risk from further abuse, contact the police or child, youth and family services immediately

### Why report abuse?

Sometimes people wonder whether abuse should be reported to the Police or Child, Youth and Family when a child has disclosed. There are many reasons why reporting abuse is important:



- A serious crime that harms children has been committed
- The abuser may be abusing other children and it's essential this stops
- Abusers don't usually stop without outside intervention
- All children involved will get the best possible help
- To get support for yourself or the family of the child
- To get a specialist medical check-up for the child.

Some people worry about what will happen if they report abuse. It's important to remember that you can do this anonymously if you prefer. Even if you don't know all the facts, you can report suspected abuse and leave it up to the professionals to investigate further. You won't get into trouble or break the privacy laws if you have passed on your concerns in good faith. Reporting abuse is an example of adults taking responsibility to keep children safe.

## **Who Might Become Involved If A Child Has Been Sexually Abused?**

Because your child deserves the best possible help, it is important you consult and inform the appropriate people when your child discloses abuse. Children who receive professional help as soon as possible after disclosing sexual abuse have fewer problems in the future.

**The following people may become involved after abuse has been reported:**

### **Police**

The Police have special teams to investigate sexual abuse of children. Their main job is to gather all the information together and make

decisions about whether to prosecute the alleged offender in court. The Police will want to hear the child's story. Specially trained interviewers who know how to question children in a child-friendly way will talk with the child. This interview process can be healing for the child. It is often the first step in the child's recovery process. Often these interviews are recorded on video. Sometimes cases go to Court. There are special rules about how children must be cared for while giving evidence in Court. Further information is available in the video: "What Will Happen If I Tell" which is listed at the back of this booklet.

### **The Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services**

Child, Youth and Family will appoint a social worker for the child and the family. Their job is to ensure that the child is safe and receives the best help possible. They will guide the child and the family through the investigation process, arrange appointments and provide information.

### **Specialist doctors**

A medical examination should always be considered for any child who has been sexually abused, because it may reassure the child that they are healthy. Children will not have the same kind of examination as an adult. Great care is taken when carrying out a medical assessment. An urgent examination may be necessary for children who have been abused recently (especially within 72 hours), or for children who have symptoms such as genital bleeding, discharge or pain. In most cases the examination will be normal, so there will be no medical evidence. It is important to understand that the examination will not 'prove' whether the abuse happened or not.

There are doctors and nurses who are specially trained to do this work. This training has been provided by DSAC (Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care). If you take your child to see a doctor because of a concern about sexual abuse, they should refer you to someone who has received this training.

Your family doctor, local Accident and Emergency Clinic, or hospital emergency department should always be able to consult with a DSAC-trained doctor. If they do not know who to ring, the Paediatrician at the local hospital, or the Police should know who to contact. During working hours, the DSAC office in Auckland will be able to provide the name of an appropriately trained doctor in your area.

#### **Counselling/Therapy:**

##### ***Counselling for children and families***

Some children may not outwardly show any signs that the sexual abuse has affected them. If your child has been abused, you may feel that your child should just be able to get on with his/her life rather than attend counselling. Children often protect those they love by not talking much about upsetting things like sexual abuse for fear of hurting them. It is important for an independent person to check the impact that the sexual abuse has had on the child's development. Some effects of abuse only emerge in later years.

It is especially important that children do not blame themselves for the abuse and have a place where they can safely express their many feelings and sort out their confusion.

Most parents and caregivers find that they, too, need supportive counselling in order to best help their child recover from the effects of the abuse.

There are many agencies available that provide specialised services for sexually abused children and their families. Many families choose to receive counselling or therapy through the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). ACC provides registered counsellors and are able to assist with some of the costs of counselling.

You can find the phone number for ACC at the back of this book or you can talk to your GP who can make a referral to ACC for your child.

#### **Counselling for abusers**

##### ***Specialist help***

People who sexually abuse children can also receive specialist help in order to change their behaviour. Specialised help for child sexual abusers has been shown to be very effective in stopping further abuse (Lambie and Stewart, 2003). The numbers for these specialist counselling services are listed in the back of the book.

*"It made it easier for me to tell, knowing there are places where people like my Dad can get help. I told because I wanted him to get help, not just to see him get punished."*

*– 16-year-old girl*



## Are You Prepared? Making A Safety Plan

Everybody can play a part in helping to keep children safe from sexual abuse.

### Ask yourself...

- Am I teaching my children about sexual safety?
- Am I aware of how sexual abusers operate?
- Am I able to recognise sexual abuse warning signs?
- Am I prepared to speak up when I notice worrying behaviour in adults, teenagers or children?

Becoming informed and educated about child sexual abuse and its prevention is the first step. You can be informed and prepared by having a S-A-F-E-T-Y P-L-A-N.



**S**tart by taking responsibility: without adult help, abuse won't stop

**A**buser awareness: know how they operate

**F**amily safety rules for everyone in your household

**E**arly warning signs alert us to concerning behaviour

**T**hink about who you choose to care for your children

**Y**es to open communication with your children

**P**ractice safety rules with your kids

**L**earn where to go for help

**A**ct on any suspicions you may have

**N**ever ignore worrying behaviour



## Taking Action



The following pages contain several examples of when you might need to take action when possible child sexual abuse is suspected. After each example, some suggestions for what to do are listed.

### Scenario One:

*My brother-in-law, Harry, was cuddling his eleven year old daughter, Janet, and teasing her about how she was growing up to become a woman. He laughed about the skimpy top she was wearing. Janet was clearly uncomfortable with Harry's cuddle and his comments. She tried to get off his knee but he would not let her go.*

#### Is this an example of abuse?

This could just be family fun, but it is clear that Janet is uncomfortable and Harry is not respecting her wishes. Sometimes this sort of behaviour is a subtle way of grooming a child for sexual contact.

#### What could you do?

- You could try saying something light-hearted to Harry like, "you're embarrassing her. Give her a break".
- You could speak to Janet in front of Harry, saying something like: "it's awful being teased, come and help me for a minute"; and later ask her about whether that kind of thing happens a lot.

#### If, after talking to Janet, you are still worried then:

- Talk to her mother and maybe other family members. Ask how Harry and Janet are getting on.
- Pass on your observation that Janet seems uncomfortable about

her dad's comments and behaviour.

- Let Janet know that she can always talk to you about dad's teasing if it is a problem to her.
- Make some enquiries around the family about Harry's behaviour around Janet and other children, and keep an eye on uncle Harry.
- If the problem persists, talk with someone from one of the organisations listed at the back of the book.

### Scenario Two:

*Your seven year old child does not want to stay with Gran and Grandad anymore and cannot give you a reason for this sudden change. She has become withdrawn, clingy and generally unhappy in the past month or so.*

#### Could abuse be happening?

There are many reasons why seven year old children might become withdrawn, clingy and unhappy. Don't jump to conclusions. Keep an open mind.

#### What could you do?

- Don't force your daughter to stay overnight until you are sure she is comfortable to do this
- Spend time with your daughter and gently try to get her to talk about her worries and feelings. Maybe talk with her about her likes and dislikes when staying at her grandparents. Ask her if anything has happened to upset her
- Observe your daughter with her grandparents
- Make some enquiries around the family about whether other



- children have been worried about staying with the grandparents
- Find the time to remind your daughter about good and bad secrets and good and bad touching so that she is clear about this important keeping safe information
  - Talk with the grandparents about why this might be, e.g. it might be that your child broke Gran's best vase or something similar
  - If the problem persists and your child continues to be clingy, withdrawn and unhappy, talk with someone from one of the organisations listed at the back of the book.



### Scenario Three:

*Your new partner, who you have known for two months, offers to baby-sit your 6 and 8 year old children next Saturday night. This is the third Saturday night in four weeks that he has encouraged you to go out. Despite your concerns that he has only known the children a short time, he seems to get on really well with them and seems to genuinely care about them. You really need a break and he doesn't seem to mind staying at home.*

### Could abuse be happening or about to happen?

You have a tricky choice to make. This could be a genuinely kind and safe offer, but keep in mind that this is also often the way in which abusers start to abuse within families, particularly single parent families. It might look like good, caring behaviour, but that is not necessarily the aim.

An abuser's aim is to make sure everyone feels safe and trusts him/her. Offering to baby-sit also provides opportunities for the

abuser to be alone with children. Appearing nice and caring is called 'grooming' and makes it easier for an abuser to abuse.

### What could you do?

- Talk to your new partner about why he offers to baby-sit all the time. Does this seem unusual in a new relationship?
- Ask yourself whether you've known this new partner long enough to trust him to be alone with your children
- Let your new partner know that you are aware of the risk of sexual abuse and that the safety of your children is your priority
- Tell him you have safety rules in place in your house to help keep your children safe from sexual abuse
- Check his response to these rules. If he is overly defensive or criticises you, be cautious. Appearing a little nervous about them may be fine
- Notice what your new partner is like with your children. Does he show any of the worrying signs of adult behaviour listed earlier in this booklet e.g. dominating or controlling family life
- Is he open to comments about his behaviour with children?
- Ask your friends and family to observe this, too, and pass on any concerns
- Ask your children how they feel about being baby-sat with your new partner and remind them of the safety rules
- Before leaving your children for an extended period at night-time, you could test things by allowing him to baby-sit for a shorter period during the day
- After he has baby-sat, check with your children how they felt about the experience and ask what they did when you weren't there.

- Notice whether there are any changes in your children after the baby-sitting
- If your children show reluctance to be baby sat by your new partner, take notice. It may simply be common childhood anxiety, or it may be something more worrying. Keep talking with your children about their feelings over time
- Don't leave your children alone with any new partner until you have had a chance to get to see his relationship with your children develop over an extended period of time.

#### **Remember:**

- Child sexual abusers may also be in sexual relationships with adults at the same time they are abusing children
- Adults who sexually abuse children often spend more time with children than with adults
- Child sexual abusers try to create opportunities to be alone with children, for example, taking them out for drives, camping or baby-sitting
- They most often abuse children who are the most vulnerable and most available to them
- Child sexual abusers will always try to isolate a child
- Child sexual abusers will always try to silence a child by making them keep abuse a secret



#### **Scenario Four:**

*You have just moved to a new neighbourhood. The family next door has been particularly welcoming and you want to be friendly with them. Their 15 year old boy makes friends with your kids who are aged 11 and 9. He is very good with them – playing with them and*

*showing them around the neighbourhood. In fact he often arranges games for all the children in the neighbourhood. One evening he asks you if your 11 year old boy can sleep over with him in a tent in his back yard.*

#### **Could abuse be happening or be about to happen?**

This could be a genuinely friendly offer and be completely safe.

However, teenagers who sexually abuse sometimes befriend younger children as opposed to spending time with people their own age. Sometimes they set up activities or situations which get children alone with them. What can appear to both adults and children as friendly behaviour can, in fact, be a way of grooming children for abuse.

#### **What could you do?**

- Ask yourself whether there are good reasons for this 15 year old to be friends with an 11 year old, e.g. is there no-one else closer in age for him to be with?
- Notice how often the 15 year old wants to be with your son. Is this request a one-off or not?
- Casually ask the 15 year old about his interest in being with younger kids a lot of the time.
- Observe and ask whether he ever spends time with friends closer to his own age?
- Ask your 11 year old about his friendship with this older boy.
- In every sleepover situation, you should ask about where your child will be sleeping, who else will be there, and what adult supervision there will be.



### Sleepover Rules:



- Check out the plans for the night.
- Check with your child that she/he genuinely wants to sleepover with the other child and that she/he is not just feeling pressured or attracted by something else in the house like games, toys, playstation etc.
- Sleepovers are safest when your child can bath, toilet and dress himself or herself. This can be made clear to the sleepover parents beforehand.
- You might like to phone your child before bedtime.
- Tell your child that she/he can phone at any time - even in the middle of the night - if they are worried or concerned. Make sure the sleepover parents agree to this in front of your child.
- Check what level of supervision will be available

### Scenario Five:

*One afternoon you get a call from your best friends. They sound upset and ask to come over and see you. When they arrive they tell you that their 7 year old girl has told them that your 16 year old daughter climbed into bed while baby-sitting last night and touched her private parts.*

### Could abuse have occurred?

Your 16-year-old could be entirely innocent. Nothing may have happened, or it might have been accidental touching. However, it is extremely rare for children to describe in detail something they know

nothing about. Remember that both boys and girls do abuse, and that teenagers who sexually abuse will often abuse during baby-sitting.

### What could you do?

- Before jumping to conclusions, it is important to get more detailed information about what might have happened
- Remain open to the possibility that something could have happened
- Don't accuse, blame, and get angry with the other family
- Talk to your teenager. Begin with general questions like:  
"How did it go last night?"  
"What did you do while (child) was asleep?"
- Don't initially tell your teenager about the allegations. It's best for this to emerge from the conversation
- Ask things like: "Is there any reason why (child) might feel unhappy about last night while you were baby-sitting?"  
Watch your teenager's reaction and for their normal signs of discomfort or lying
- If your teenager still denies anything, present the allegations calmly.
- Say that if anything happened, they need to tell you.
- Try not to be angry or blaming. Be reassuring. Explain: "the child is saying things and it's best we get your side of the story"
- If your teenager continues to say that nothing happened, you should still remain open to the possibility that abuse occurred
- If your teenager admits abuse, tell the parents of the child making the allegations
- If the parents of the 7 year old go to Child, Youth and Family or Police, their child will get appropriate help
- Get help for your teenager through one of the agencies in the back of this book

- If your teenager admits or denies abusing, don't let them baby-sit or be alone with children until you have got advice from one of the organisations listed at the back of this booklet.

If a teenager has sexually abused, it does not mean she or he is a paedophile or will go to jail. However, the behaviour won't go away by itself, and help is available.

## A Message To Potential Abusers

If you have sexually abused a child or find yourself looking at children or pictures of children and **thinking** about being sexual with them, **YOU NEED TO STOP NOW!**

### If you have sexually abused a child:

- You may fear what will happen if anyone finds out
- You may feel too ashamed of your behaviour to ask for help
- You may want to stop and have tried; yet you find yourself continuing despite promises to yourself.

### If you are thinking about being sexual with a child:

- You may feel that this is quite normal or justified
- You may feel that you are in control of your behaviour
- You may feel very uncomfortable about where this behaviour is going.

### Some things you need to know about child sexual abuse:

- It is wrong and harmful
- It is a serious crime
- It is almost impossible to stop by yourself

## BUT...

There is help available. If you are worried about yourself or someone else, you can anonymously phone one of the numbers listed below and get advice about the best thing to do. These organisations successfully help families to keep children safe by treating those who sexually abuse.

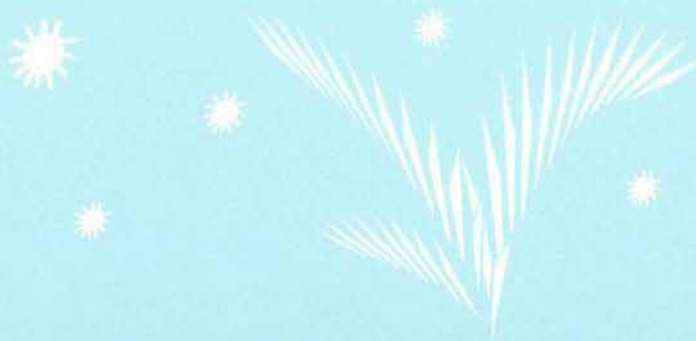
SAFE	Auckland	(09) 377 9898
STOP	Wellington	(04) 566 4745
STOP	Christchurch	(03) 374 5010

**Make a choice to keep children safe – now!**



*I wish I'd made the decision to get help years ago. Now I've been through the programme I've stopped abusing, I feel better about myself, and my family relationships are better than ever."*

– 40 year old man





# Where To Go For More Information And Help

*Today there are many resources to help victims and their families who have suffered sexual abuse.*

## **To report abuse:**

- Department of Child, Youth, and Family  
0508 FAMILY (0508 326459)
- Police  
Dial 111 in an emergency or your nearest Police station.

## **Help for people who have been abused:**

- Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP Foundation (24 hours)  
Phone (09) 623 1700
- Child Abuse Prevention Service  
24 hours 0800 ABUSE PREVENT (0800 228737)
- ACC (Sensitive Claims Unit)  
Phone 0800 735 566 to find out information about ACC  
Registered Counsellors in your area
- Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care, (09) 376 1422
- Internet Saftey Group 0508 NET SAFE (0508 638 7233)

## **Help for Abusers:**

- SAFE AUCKLAND  
(09)377 9898
- STOP WELLINGTON  
(04)566 4745
- STOP CHRISTCHURCH  
(03) 374 5010



## **National Network of Stopping Violence Services**

(04) 499 6384

## **Books for adults to read:**

- Keeping Children Safe from Sexual Abuse by Caroline Witten-Hannah (available from Child, Youth and Family)
- Protect Your Child: A Parent's Guide (companion to 'It's My Body') by Janie Hart-Rossi
- Keep Children Safe by Freda Briggs
- Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviours - What's Natural and Healthy, by Toni Cavanagh-Johnson.  
Available at [www.tcavjohn.com](http://www.tcavjohn.com).



## **Books to read to children:**

- It's My Body: How to Resist Uncomfortable Touch by Lory Freeman
- What's wrong with Bottoms? by Jenny Hessel.
- Daniel and his Therapist by Lynda Morgan
- Megan's Secret by Lynda Morgan
- Katie's Yucky Problem by Lynda Morgan
- Loving Touches: A book for Children about Positive, Caring Kinds of Touch, by Lory Freeman.

## **Books for Teenagers:**

- Look Back, Stride Forward, by Miriam Saphira and Lyndy McIntyre
- No is Not Enough, Helping Teenagers Avoid Assault, by Caren Adams, Jennifer Fay, Jan Loreen and Mantin.

## **Books about Abusers**

- Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abusers by Recognising the Patterns of the Offenders by Carla Van Dam
- From Victim to Offender by Freda Briggs.

## Videos

- What Will Happen If I Tell? Video tapes \$29.95 each. Available from [info@emfanz.org](mailto:info@emfanz.org) or EMFANZ, PO Box 3138, Auckland 1015.
- Truth Lies and Sex Offenders, by Anna Salter. Available from: [www.specialisedtraining.com](http://www.specialisedtraining.com).

## Websites

- Child, Youth and Family [www.cyf.govt.nz](http://www.cyf.govt.nz)
- Police [www.police@govt.nz](mailto:police@govt.nz)
- Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care (DSAC) <http://www.dsac.org.nz/>
- SAFE [www.safenetwork.co.nz](http://www.safenetwork.co.nz)
- Internet Safety Group [www.netsafe.org.nz](http://www.netsafe.org.nz)
- Stop It Now [www.stopitnow.com](http://www.stopitnow.com) and [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk).



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