**Child Sexual Abuse Information Sheet for Children**

**What is Child Sexual Abuse?**

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult or older child touches or rubs a child’s private parts (penis, testicles, vagina, bottom, breasts), or when an adult or older child asks a child to touch or rub the other person’s private parts. This kind of touching is **not OK.** The person who does this is called a sex offender. The offender might make the child do these things and can be rough, or he/she might pretend it’s a game or even give the child a reward to do it. The offender could be someone known to the child – a relative, a family friend, a teenager, or another child. Still, it’s not OK even if the person tries to make it fun, and the child thinks it’s fun.

**Who is sexually abused?**

Sexual abuse happens to a lot of children. It can happen to boys and girls of all ages, religions, and races. Some children who have been sexually abused are rich, some are poor, and they are all from different neighborhoods. By the age of 18, one of every four girls and one of seven boys may have experienced sexual abuse.

**Who sexually abuses children?**

Some people sexually abuse children, but many more people only touch children with *not OK* touches. Most sex offenders are men, though some are women. Children cannot tell by the way these people look, dress, or act that they are offenders. Most of the time, the offender is not a stranger but someone whom the child knows very well. The offender could be a family member (such as cousin, uncle, parent, or grandparent) or someone who is well known to the child (such as a coach, babysitter, or neighbor).

**Why don’t children tell?**

Sometimes the offender tells the child to keep the not OK touching is a secret. The offender may use tricks to keep the child from telling. The person may say that it’s the child’s fault or that the child or his/her family will get hurt if the child tells. These are all tricks. Sometimes children just keep it a secret because they feel ashamed, embarrassed, or scared. For those reasons, many children don’t tell about sexual abuse or they take a little while to gain the courage to tell. It helps the children to keep telling adults until they find an adult who will help them to stop the sexual abuse.

**Why does sexual abuse happen?**

There are a lot of different reasons, just like there are lots of different offenders. But it’s very hard to know the reason why it happens to any child. We do know this much: No child is responsible for what an adult does.

**How can you tell that a child has been sexually abused?**

You can’t tell by looking at a child that he/she has been sexually abused. Sometimes you can tell by the way the child is acting that something is bothering him/her, but you don’t know what it is. That is why it is so important for children to tell somebody when they experience a not OK or confusing touch.

**How do children feel when they have been sexually abused?**

Children may have all kinds of feelings in response to sexual abuse. The sexual touching may feel good to some children, and they may still like the person who did it. But some children have other feelings; they are very angry at the person who did the abuse or are scared of him/her. Other children might feel guilty about what happened. Any of these feelings is OK. Sometimes when people have these feelings, the feelings affect the way they behave. A child who is afraid my not want to sleep alone or be left alone. Sometimes children get into more arguments, and sometimes they may just feel sad and want to be alone. Some children feel upset for a long time after the abuse has ended, but they often feel better with the help of counseling. If children are having a hard time with these feelings, talking with a counselor or a parent can help them feel better.

**How can children respond to child sexual abuse?**

All children need to know that their body belongs to them. If you feel uncomfortable in the way you are being touched, you can tell the person “NO!” Saying “NO!” can sometimes be hard to do, especially if you’re scared, shy, or embarrassed. But the next thing you can do is “GO” – get away from that person. And the next and most important thing to do is “TELL” – although this can also be hard to do, it is important to tell an adult (such as parent, other family member, or a teacher) about what happened. It is important to keep telling until someone listens and helps. Remember the steps: NO – GO – TELL!!

It’s great to talk to a counselor or a parent. It helps to talk about sexual abuse, even though it can be hard. Talking, writing, and even singing and drawing can help children who have been sexually abused feel better after a while.

It’s important to tell adults about child sexual abuse so that they can get help. There is a special agensy in every stat that is available to help children who have experienced abuse.