



It's time ... to talk about it! Talk early, talk often. Prevent sexual violence.

Tips for parents & caregivers

Sexual violence is a widespread issue that impacts everyone. This fact sheet provides information about sexual assault and how parents and caregivers can play a role in preventing sexual violence and supporting survivors. Together we can create safe and respectful communities.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is a broad term and includes rape, incest, child sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism.

Sexual violence occurs when someone is forced or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. Reasons someone might not consent include fear, age, illness, disability, and/or influence of alcohol or other drugs. Anyone can experience sexual violence, including children, teens, adults, and elders.

These crimes are widespread and occur daily in our communities, schools, and workplaces, but sexual violence can be prevented. Community members can work to prevent sexual violence by establishing healthy and positive relationships that are based on respect, safety, and equality.

Sexual violence at a glance

- One in six boys and one in four girls will experience a sexual assault before the age 18 (Dube et al., 2005).

- One in five women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives (Black et al., 2011).
- A majority of women who reported being raped at some point in their life (79.6%) experienced their first rape before the age of 25, and 42.2% experienced their first completed rape before the age of 18 years (Black et al., 2011).
- More than 25% of male victims in a national sample reported their first rape was when they were 10 years of age or younger (Black et al., 2011).
- Rape is far more extensive than reported in official statistics, and the majority of rapists are never apprehended (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004).

Your role in prevention

You can play a role in changing the underlying norms and culture that allows sexual violence. Traditional gender roles, power imbalances, and victim-blaming all contribute to sexual violence.



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Be a part of the solution:

- Be a role model for respectful behavior to those around you.
- Talk with your children about healthy sexual development and personal boundaries.
- Intervene and speak up when you see inappropriate behavior. To better equip yourself in these situations, practice what you might say or do.
- Talk to someone from your local sexual assault center for more information. Invite them to speak in your schools, faith communities or workplaces.
- Learn more about sexual violence and share information with others.
- Learn about reporting suspected child abuse. Know what to do if you or someone you know suspects a child may be being abused.

How you can help

Parents and caregivers are uniquely positioned to assist children and teens experiencing sexual violence, as they often see the warning signs –sudden changes in behavior or mood, lower grades, social withdrawal – before others. In addition, children and teens may turn to you to discuss what is happening. All adults are responsible for keeping children safe and protecting them from harm.

If you suspect a child is being abused, contact the police or your local child protective services agency, the ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453), or local sexual violence program.

How to offer support

When someone discloses sexual abuse, it is important to know how to respond. Here are some tips (End Violence on Campus, 2009):

- Stay calm and listen. Take a deep breath and create an environment where the child or teen can talk and share.
- Offer your support. Stop everything else that you are doing. Nothing else is more important at this time than supporting the child. Let the victim know that she or he is not to blame for what happened.
- Let them know that you believe and support them. Victims of sexual violence are often met with disbelief when they decide to tell someone. In most cases, their trust has been broken. They may be hesitant to trust others with their story.
- Empower the child or teen by telling them they have a right to be safe and free from violence. Be honest and up front about reporting the abuse or getting support. Help them find resources in the community such as trained individuals to talk with.

Resources

- **ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) www.childhelp.org
- **National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC):** www.nsvrc.org
- **The Hero Project - A Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape project:** www.heroproject.org
- **Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN):** www.rainn.org



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References

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