

Understanding the Investigatory Process

Strategies for Prevention

Talking With Your Child

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Multi Disciplinary Teams

A group of professionals from varying disciplines working together on cases involving criminal level child abuse. Team members are trained specialist who meet regularly to discuss individual cases, identify system needs, work cooperatively to improve the investigation and possible prosecution of cases, and to protect the children from further trauma.

Multidisciplinary Investigation Team of Greater Danbury (MIT)

Created in 1999 to comply with Connecticut State Statue requiring all jurisdictions to have a coordinated approach to investigations of child sexual abuse.

Team members include: DCF, Office of the State's Attorney, State & Local Police Department, Family and Children's Aid, Danbury Hospital, Women's Center, Office of Victim Services

Reporter

DCF

Police

MIT



Forensic Interview

Medical and Mental Health Referrals

DCF

Police

MIT



Department of Children and Families

- Reporting / Careline
- Area Office Assignment
- FAR vs. Intake
- Time Frame

Police Process

- Confidentiality
- Juvenile Investigations
- Jurisdictional Issues

What is Child Sexual Abuse

Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other.

Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet.

Child Sexual Abuse

- 1 in 4 girls are sexually abused before 18yrs
- 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before 18yrs
- 93% of victims know their abuser
- 34% are abused by family members
- 59% are abused by people the family knows
- 22% of victims are under 8yrs old

Child Sexual Abuse

- Median age for reported sexual abuse is 9yrs
- Only 1 in 10 child victims report abuse
- Girls report at a higher rate than boys
- Children with disabilities are over 3 times more likely to be abused (Sullivan, 2000)

What the Research Tells Us About Children's Disclosures?

- **Disclosure is a process, not an event**
- **Children who are sexually abused often do not disclose during childhood** (London et al., 2005)
- **Young children are the least likely to tell**

Why Parents Need to Engage in Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

- Parents are the right people to impart child sexual abuse (CSA) information
- Knowledge about CSA helps protect children. Lack of education leaves them vulnerable
- Parents can influence child's knowledge and values
- Parents can prepare their children and teach them facts

So Why Don't Parents Discuss CSA?

- My child is too young to understand CSA (41%)
- It has not occurred to me to discuss CSA with my child (36%)
- I do not know how to explain CSA to my child (23%)
- The topic might frighten my child (21%)
- Sexual abuse is too difficult for me to discuss (16%)
- My child is not at risk for CSA (15%)

(Deblinger, Thakkar-Kolar, Berry, & Schroeder, 2010)

What can you do to help prevent child sexual abuse

- Teach children the correct name for body parts
- Teach children about privacy
- Teach children that adults are not always right and that they can say NO if an adult wants them to do something they are uncomfortable with
- Monitor and supervise your child's activities, including access to the internet
- Know your children's friends and the parents of your children's friends

Continued

- Be careful who you choose to care for and spend time with your children
- Reduce the opportunities for an adults to have “alone time” with your child
- Teach children that a bad touch can appear to be a good touch
- Pay attention to your gut
- Educate yourself about the protective factors that help reduce risks.

(<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2014/guide.pdf>)

What to talk to Children About

- Teach correct names for body parts
- Establish touching boundaries
- Teach about touch
- Promote healthy sexuality
- Go beyond stranger danger
- Establish privacy rules in home
- Give permission to tell
- Talk about secrets/tricks/threats
- Educate on vulnerable situations
- Include social media/internet safety

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

Behavioral signs that could indicate a problem, including the possibility of sexual abuse

- Acting younger
- Sudden changes in behavior
- Fear of being alone with certain people
- Sudden, unexplained fears of certain places or kinds of people
- Fear of being touched
- Changes in quality of schoolwork
- Self –mutilation
- Excessive play with their own private parts
- Persistent sex play with friends or toys
- Frequent drawings that have sexual content

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

Physical signs that could indicate a problem, including the possibility of sexual abuse

- Trouble sleeping
- Soiling or wetting clothes
- Stomachaches
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Underwear stained with blood or other discharge
- Problems walking or sitting

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

Emotional signs that could indicate a problem, including the possibility of sexual abuse

- Severe anxiety
- Nightmare
- Depression (withdrawal, low self esteem)
- Extreme or unexplained anger

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

Sexual behaviors, knowledge and language that are not age-appropriate can be a red flag.

In some children there are no signs whatsoever

Questioning Your Child

Ask open ended questions

- Do not include the answer you are expecting in the question
- Avoid asking specific questions

“I’m wondering if someone has been touching you in a way you don’t like (makes you uncomfortable) or don’t understand.”

If a Child Discloses Abuse

- Stay calm and listen to child.
- Tell them you believe them and are glad they told you.
- Tell child it is not their fault. Repeat.
- Report to professionals for investigation and help.
- Limit questions. Do not conduct an investigation



Questions?