

# INSPIRED

## To Make Healthy Choices

### **We ALL need to protect our youth from sexual abuse.**

Experts estimate that **1 in 10 youth are sexually abused before their 18th birthday**. One in four of all 10-17 year olds experience unwanted exposure to pornography.

**Darkness to Light (www.D2L.org) suggests 5 steps you can take to protect children in your home, family and community from child sexual abuse:**

#### **1. Learn the facts and understand the risks.**

The statistics regarding the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the US are startling.

- **90%** of children who are victims of sexual abuse **know their abuser**.
- **30%** of children who are sexually abused **are abused by family members**.
- **60%** of children who are sexually abused **are abused by people the family trusts**.
- **40%** of children who are sexually abused **are abused by older or more powerful children**.
- **10% or less** of children who are sexually abused **are abused by a stranger**.
- **More than 90%** of children who are **commercially sexually exploited have been sexually abused in the past**.

**2. Minimize the opportunity.** Limit “one-adult, one child situations”, which occur in more than 80% of reported cases. **Encourage group situations.** Support criminal background checks. Understand that abusers may be well known and trusted by potential victims and their families.

**3. Talk about it.** Talk openly with your children about safety, boundaries and sex. Use proper names for body parts. Make sure they know who they can talk to about uncomfortable or dangerous situations. “No one should ever touch you where a bathing suit covers” is a great visual for young children.

**4. Recognize the signs.** Children can exhibit different signs or no signs at all. **Emotional** (withdrawal, fear, depression, unexplained anger and rebellion) **and behavioral signs** (too perfect, acting out, bullying, being bullied, self-harm) **are more common** than physical signs (anxiety, chronic stomach pain, or headaches).

**5. React responsibly.** Listen calmly and openly and realize that **very few reported incidents of child sexual abuse are false**. Do not react with anger or disbelief. It’s important to be supportive and say something similar to “I believe you. I’m the adult and it’s my job to protect you. This takes a lot of courage; thank you for telling me. You did not do anything wrong.” Do not promise that the information will be kept confidential and do not make broad promises about the future. **It’s imperative to REPORT sexual abuse to the police or to child protective services.** Be clear and specific when you make the call and repeat only what the child told you.

**We have an obligation to stand up for our youth especially when a child discloses sexual abuse to us, we discover sexual abuse ourselves and/or we have reason to suspect it. Staying vigilant allows us to protect our youth.**

For more information:  
**SEXUAL ABUSE**  
www.guideinc.org

One of the best protections is our relationship with children.

Child sexual abuse thrives in an environment of denial and fear.

Report child pornography to police or 1-800-THE-1-OST.

Visit D2L.org/training for more training and resources.

