

CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Child sexual assault is unwanted physical contact by a non-caretaker with a child for sexual gratification. Sexual assault can include fondling or touching of private parts and non-touching experiences, such as exposing private parts for the purpose of sexual gratification. Sexual assault is a crime and can be reported to the police at any time. Even without a police report, the victim and his or her family can receive counseling and other support services.

If the offender is a caretaker, such as a baby-sitter, family member, teacher or clergy-person etc... **the offense is called sexual abuse**. Sexual abuse allegations must be reported to Child Protective Services at (240) 777-4417.

The offender is the only person responsible for the sexual assault. Sometimes the offender is someone the child knows, like a neighbor, family friend, or even other children. In other cases, the offender is a stranger who has gained access to the child. Frequently the offender forces the child to keep the touching secret, either by threatening harm to the child or to someone the child loves. In most situations, the child is tricked, bribed, or manipulated. Children often cooperate with the offender out of fear and confusion.

A child's reaction to sexual assault can vary, depending on a combination of factors. These factors include the child's age, the nature of the offense, the identity of the offender, and the frequency and duration of the assault.

The most damaging factors to a child who has been assaulted are to be disbelieved, to be held responsible for the assault, or to be left in a vulnerable situation without protection.

Even if the child has experienced a sexual contact, such as gentle fondling, the touching arouses physical sensations with which a child is unprepared to cope. Intellectually, an incident may be beyond the child's level of comprehension and create considerable confusion.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Children do not always communicate directly about sexual assault. Treatment experts have developed a list of common indicators (behaviors that can indicate assault may have occurred). The presence of several of these indicators should act as an alert that a child needs help, and the possibility of inappropriate touching should be explored. However, please remember that these symptoms DO NOT necessarily mean touching HAS occurred. Further information and assessment may be necessary. When physical signs are present in combination with behavioral signs, trust your instincts and seek help and advice from experts.



Physical Signs

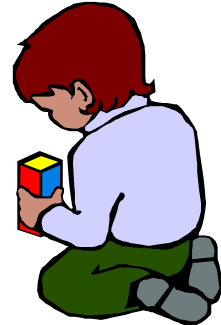
- Stains, discharge, or blood on a child's underwear.
- Swelling, redness, soreness, bruises, or itching of the genital area, buttocks, and breasts.
- Venereal disease.
- Vaginal or penile infections.
- Pregnancy.
- Burning at urination or frequent urination.
- Retention of bowels.
- History of eating disorders (Anorexia or Bulimia).



BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

Pre-School Children

- Advanced sexual knowledge observed in play with toys, peers or in pictures.
- Specific fears of a person, a place or the dark.
- Changes in sleep patterns.
- Physical complaints like headaches or stomach aches.
- Nightmares.
- Changes in eating habits.
- Difficulty making friends.
- Moodiness.
- Bed wetting.
- Anxiety, jumpiness, easily startled.
- Aggressiveness, or withdrawn behavior.
- Resumption of immature behaviors such as thumb-sucking, baby talk, and clinging to objects or parents.
- Guilt and self blame.



School Aged Children and Teenagers

- Problems at school: inability to concentrate, acting out, declining performance, truancy.
- Increasing social isolation from peers.
- Sleep disruptions.
- Changes in eating patterns.
- Specific fears of people, places, things.
- Low self-esteem.
- Moodiness, irritability, depression, anxiety.
- Aggressive and/or withdrawn behaviors.
- Immature or pseudo-adult behaviors.
- Running away and suicidal ideas and/or gestures.
- Lying and stealing.
- Physical complaints.
- Destructive behavior towards self or others.
- Advanced sexual knowledge and behaviors with others.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Delinquency.



If You Think Your Child Has Been Sexually Assaulted:

Listen to your child and believe what he/she tells you.

Reassure your child that he/she is safe, not to blame, and is loved.

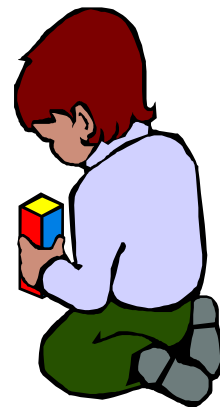
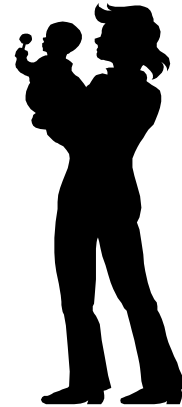
Praise your child for telling you.

Respond by providing protection to your child. Tell your child you will do what is necessary to make sure he/she is safe. **DO NOT** overreact. Try not to panic or lose control. Take care not to **overwhelm** your child with your feelings, particularly anger or shock.

Support your child by respecting his/her privacy, staying calm, and allowing the child to tell you what happened and ask questions at his/her own pace. Never judge, criticize, accuse, ignore or deny. Assure your child that the assault was not his/her fault. Sexual assault is always the responsibility of the offender.

Reporting the sexual assault to the police is voluntary and will be investigated. By reporting the offender's behavior you may be protecting your child from continued unwanted touching or another child from being assaulted. This is the most important way of preventing further victimization.

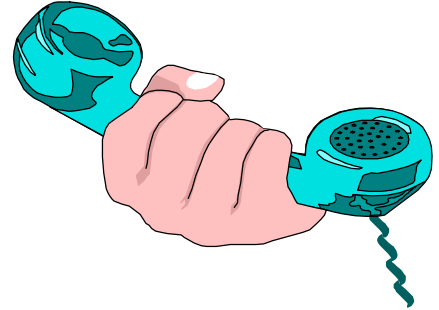
Seek medical attention to assess for injury, disease and appropriate intervention.



Sexual Assault Outreach Volunteers are available 24-hours a day to provide immediate crisis intervention to you and your child. Crisis intervention helps to clarify the problem, to provide direction, and to obtain emotional support when you need it most. Counselors, with specialized training, also provide (by appointment) assessment and ongoing treatment to sexual assault victims and adults who were molested as children.

Where to Call:

To request counseling, assessment, support and information regarding **sexual assault**, call the:



VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM

Office administration: 240-777-1355

24 hours: 240-777-HELP (4357)

TDD: 240-777-1347

To report **sexual abuse**, physical abuse or neglect, call the:

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

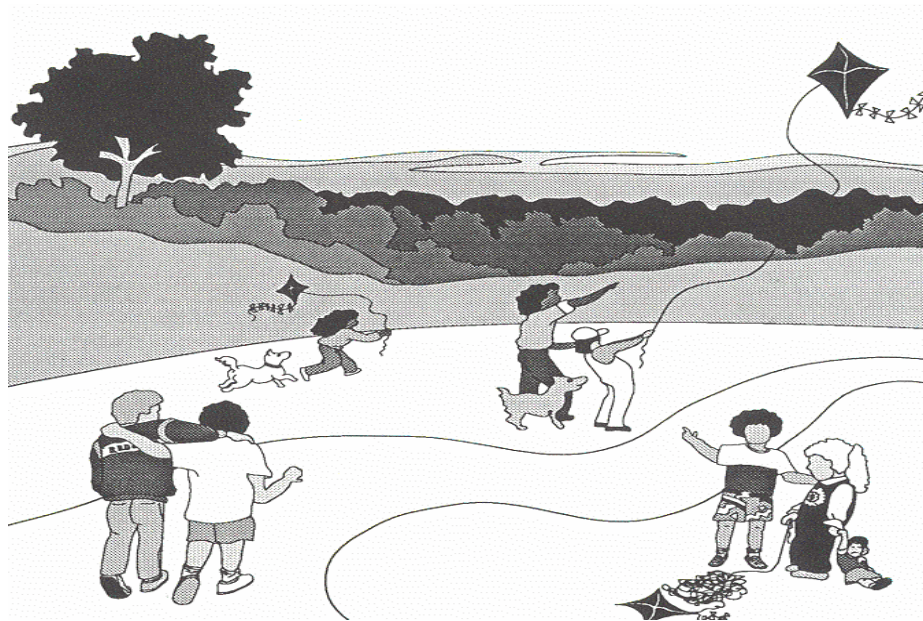
240-777-4417

To report to the Police a rape or **sexual assault** of a victim under 18 years of age, call the:



POLICE

240-773-5400 or 911



Developed by:

***Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human
Services
Behavioral Health and Crisis Services
Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)
1301 Piccard Drive
Suite 4100
Rockville, Maryland 20850***

***VASAP Line: (240) 777-1355
Crisis Line: (240) 777-HELP (4357)
Fax Line: (240) 777-1329
TTY: (240) 777-1347***

Visit us at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/vasap