

How Can I Protect My Child From Sexual Abuse?

Sexual abuse can happen to children of any race, socioeconomic group, religion, or culture. There is no foolproof way to protect children from sexual abuse, but there are steps you can take to reduce this risk. If something happens to your child, remember that the perpetrator is to blame—not you and especially not the child. Below you'll find some precautions you can take to help protect the children in your life.

If your child is in immediate danger, don't hesitate to call 911. If you aren't sure of the situation but you suspect the child is being harmed, you can take steps to gauge the situation and put an end to the abuse.

Be involved in the child's life.

Being actively involved in a child's life can make warning signs of child sexual abuse more obvious and help the child feel more comfortable coming to you if something isn't right. If you see or hear something that causes concern, you can take action to protect your child.

- **Show interest in their day-to-day lives.** Ask them what they did during the day and who they did it with. Who did they sit with at lunchtime? What games did they play after school? Did they enjoy themselves?
- **Get to know the people in your child's life.** Know who your child is spending time with, including other children and adults. Ask your child about the kids they go to school with, the parents of their friends, and other people they may encounter, such as teammates or coaches. Talk about these people openly and ask questions so that your child can feel comfortable doing the same.
- **Choose caregivers carefully.** Whether it's a babysitter, a new school, or an afterschool activity, be diligent about screening caregivers for your child.
- **Talk about the media.** Incidents of sexual violence are frequently covered by the news and portrayed in television shows. Ask your child questions about this coverage to start a conversation. Questions like, "Have you ever heard of this happening before?" or "What would you do if you were in this situation?" can signal to your child that these are important issues that they can talk about with you. Learn more about talking to your kids about sexual abuse.
- **Know the warning signs.** Become familiar with the warning signs of child sexual abuse, and notice any changes with your child, no matter how small. Whether it's happening to your child or a child you know, you have the potential to make a big difference in that person's life by stepping in.

For more, see: <https://www.rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-prevention/protecting-a-child-from-sexual-assault>

(Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, 2016)

Online Resources

Abuse Indicators – Prince George’s County Child, Adult and Family Services

<http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/SocialServices/Services/CAFS/CPS/Pages/Abuse-Indicators.aspx>

How Can I Protect My Child From Sexual Assault?

<https://www.rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-prevention/protecting-a-child-from-sexual-assault>

Preventing Child Abuse Resources - National Sexual Violence Resource Center

<http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/child-sexual-assault-prevention/preventing-child-sexual-abuse-resources>

National Child Abuse Hotline

[1-800-4-A-Child](tel:1-800-4-A-Child) or [1-800-422-4453](tel:1-800-422-4453)

Local Counseling Resources

Child Protective Services

925 Brightseat Road
Landover, MD 20785
301.909.2450 Fax 301.909.2200
(To report suspected abuse/neglect)

Prince George’s Hospital Center – Sexual Assault Center

3001 Hospital Drive
Cheverly, MD 20785
301.618.3158 Hotline 301.618.3154
Fax 301.618.2881
<http://www.dimensionshealth.org/website/c/pghc>
(For information and referrals)

List of Prince George's County Mental Health Providers

http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/Health/Resources/Documents/behavioral%20health%20providers_newest%286%29.pdf