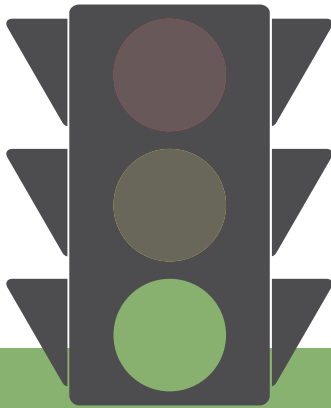


Keeping Children Safe

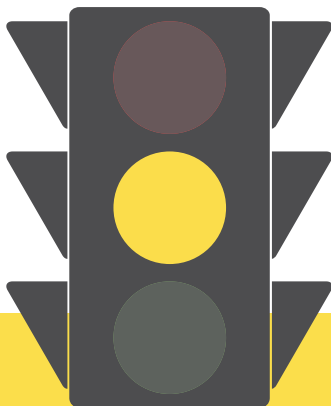


Preventing child sexual abuse is:

- Asking for permission if you need to touch a child, reinforcing that they are in charge of their bodies
- Respecting children's right to say "no" to touch and to speak up when they are uncomfortable
- Maintaining open communication
- Parents/caregivers: using the correct names for private body parts and talking to children about sexual development
- Professionals: working with children one-on-one in open spaces that are visible to others

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- Model preventative behaviors in your everyday interactions
- Establish and monitor age-appropriate guidelines around privacy, consent and boundaries for children and adults

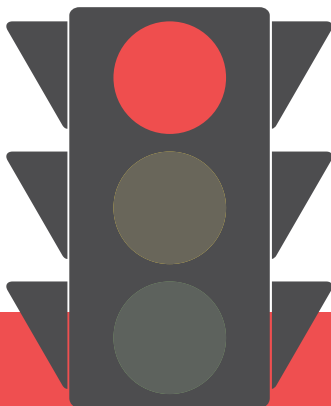


Watch for concerning or inappropriate behavior, such as:

- Seeking out or frequently initiating alone time with a child
- Giving special treatment, favoritism or gifts to a child
- Encouraging or keeping secrets with children
- Using touch, hugs or physical contact with a child in ways that are inappropriate for one's role
- Ignoring or invalidating a child's right to say "no" to physical contact

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- Set clear boundaries; give reminders of appropriate interactions
- Increase monitoring with random drop-ins and observations
- Consult someone you trust; provide ongoing support to the child



Child sexual abuse is:

- Fondling or rubbing against a child's private parts, butt or breasts
- Asking or coercing a child to touch someone's private parts
- Exposing private parts to a child
- Showing or making pornographic movies or images of/to a child
- Having inappropriate sexual conversations with children in person, on the phone, or on the internet

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- Call the Illinois child abuse hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE.
If there are immediate safety concerns, also call 911.

Children often indicate something is wrong through behaviors, not words.

There are many reasons why children may not disclose abuse. They may be ashamed or fear that no one will believe them. Many abusers make threats to ensure that victims do not tell. Because most abusers have a close relationship with the child and their family, the child may worry about getting their abuser or themselves in trouble.

Recognize the signs.

Children often disclose abuse through unusual behaviors and changes in behaviors. Because many forms of abuse are not physically evident, adults should recognize certain behavioral cues and provide support. Adults who suspect abuse should call the child abuse hotline or their local police department. Consider the possibility of abuse when a child:

- is hesitant about being alone with a specific adult or child
- has sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- suddenly refuses to change for or participate in physical activities
- experiences nightmares, trouble sleeping or bed-wetting
- shows signs of depression, anxiety, aggression or suicidal ideation, including cutting and other forms of self-harm
- becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted infection, particularly if under 14
- experiences pain when sitting, walking or using the bathroom

Respond with compassion.

Remember that an abuser can be a woman, a man, an adolescent, or someone who the child knows. Coming forward takes courage. If a child discloses abuse to you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully. Encourage the child to speak freely, but do not ask detailed questions about the abuse.
- Reassure the child. Tell the child that you believe him or her, that telling you was the right thing to do, and that he or she has not done anything wrong.

Report suspected abuse.

If you suspect or know that a child is being abused, call the Illinois child abuse hotline: 1-800-25-ABUSE. If there are immediate safety concerns, also call 911. Anyone can call to make a report, and reports can be made anonymously