

## About the CAC

The Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Bristol County, a program of JRI, is a private, non-profit agency that assists children and families impacted by the trauma of child abuse. A coordinated multi-disciplinary team comprised of investigative agencies, family advocates, specialized health services and treatment services works together. Over 5,000 children have come through the Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County since we opened our doors in 2007. Because of these staggering statistics, the agency also has an education and outreach program to address awareness and prevention.

## Preventing child abuse is an adult's role

Protecting children from sexual abuse is the responsibility of adults. Caretakers should teach their children about personal safety and appropriate boundaries however children are not responsible for protecting themselves from sexual predators. The first step in preventing child sexual abuse is to take responsibility for protecting your children. There's no excuse for child abuse.

## What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and another person in which the child is used for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator or observer. Sexual abuse can include both touching and non-touching behaviors.

- Touching behaviors may involve contact with genitals, breasts or buttocks, oral-genital contact, or sexual intercourse.
- Non-touching behaviors can include voyeurism (trying to look at a child's naked body), exhibitionism (obtaining gratification from the indecent exposure of one's genitals), or exposing the child to pornography.
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC). This term refers to any person under the age of 18 who engages, agrees to engage in or offers to engage in sexual conduct in exchange for anything of value including money, food, shelter, clothing, education or care.

## Know the Facts

### Did you know?

- 1 in 10 children will be abused before the age 18
- In 90% of child sexual abuse cases, the abuser is someone the family knows and trusts
- Between 30-40% of child sexual abusers are family members
- Not all abusers are adults - an estimated 20-30% of reported cases of child sexual abuse are committed by individuals under the age of 18

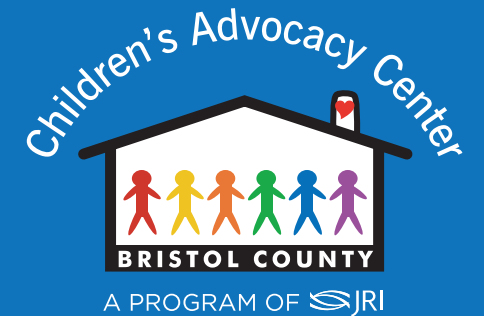
## What can you do to help in your community?

- Donate time and resources to the Children's Advocacy Center and prevention programs.
- Speak out on issues of child sexual abuse.
- Advocate on behalf of the CAC. Let your town, state and federal elected officials know that you support our mission and ask that they make our mission their funding priority.



58 Arch Street, Fall River, MA 02724  
508-674-6111 | [www.cacofbc.org](http://www.cacofbc.org)

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## Talk openly with your children

Begin talking at an early age about body safety and talk with your children often. It is important to normalize discussion about safety of all body parts. We do not think twice about teaching our children how to cross the street safely. Teaching our children how to keep their bodies safe from sexual abuse should be just as natural.

- Educate your children about correct names for private body parts (i.e., penis or vagina) so they feel comfortable speaking to you about this topic. We don't give different or silly names to any other body parts.
- Make sure your children know they can come to you about anything and they will not be in trouble.
- Be open to discussing topics such as sexual development, healthy relationships, puberty, masturbation, nudity, sexual orientation, appropriate boundaries for physical touch and consent. Abusers often take advantage of a child's natural curiosity or lack of knowledge about their bodies and sexual development.

## Teach your children about appropriate and inappropriate touching

- Give your children clear examples about which parts of their body should not be seen or touched by others. No one should touch a child's private body parts except to keep them clean or for medical purposes. Teach your children that adults never need help with their private parts.
- Tell your children that if someone touches them or tries to touch them in an inappropriate manner, they should tell you or a safe person immediately.
- Teach your children that if someone asks them to remove their clothes, asks for or takes pictures of them without clothes, they should tell you or a safe person.
- Reinforce that your child's body belongs to them. Hugs, kisses, or other touches should always be optional, even from family members. Respect when a child says "no."

## Distinguish between secrets and surprises

- Talk to your children about not keeping secrets, especially about touching. Talk to your children about secrets they may have been asked to keep. Discuss times where keeping a secret (or even a friend's secret) could be harmful.
- A surprise is the kind of secret we want people to find out eventually—like a birthday surprise. Your children should know that secrets about touching or secrets that children are asked to keep forever are never okay.

## Discuss safety rules early and review them often

- Help your children practice safety rules, like saying "No," getting away, and telling a responsible grown up.
- Teach your children the "always-ask-first-rule." Your children should understand that they must ask permission before going anywhere, helping anyone or accepting anything.
- Teach your children about the "buddy system" and how to use it.

## Minimize opportunities

- Be thorough when selecting a caretaker for your children (even family members or friends). Ask lots of questions before selecting someone to care for your children. Know the person's background and whether they have a related criminal history or any concerning behaviors.
- You can lower the risk of abuse by reducing one-adult/one-child situations. More than 80% of child sexual abuse occurs when the abuser and victim are alone/isolated.
- Stay involved in your children's activities. Attend practices, recitals and other events.
- Abusers rely on routines. Make unannounced visits to regularly scheduled activities, which helps to show people that you are paying attention.
- Get to know your children's friends and families.
- Let others know that you and your children are educated about child sexual abuse.

## What you can do to empower your children to tell about abuse

- Assure your children they will not disappoint you if they tell you about abuse.
- Ask your children regularly if anyone has ever made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Encourage your children to trust their instincts if any person or situation seems unsafe.
- Believe and trust your child if they are trying to tell. Children RARELY lie about sexual abuse.
- Help your children identify other safe grownups they can tell about abuse.

## Understand why children do not tell about abuse

- Shame
- Confusion
- Fear of disappointing parents
- Fear of threat from the abuser
- They have been told by the abuser to keep it a secret

## Understand how children do tell about abuse

- Children may tell a trusted friend or trusted adult other than their parent.
- Experiences of abuse often come in pieces and happen gradually over time.
- Children may tell because they are triggered by something else that reminds them of their abuse.
- Children will often shut down or take back disclosures if you react negatively or emotionally.

## A child sexual abuser may be

- A respected member of the community
- Male or female, married or single
- Of any race, religion, or sexual orientation
- A child, adolescent or adult
- A family member, relative, family friend, teacher, clergy or babysitter
- Anyone who comes in contact with children

## Recognize grooming

Grooming is the process by which an offender manipulates a child into a sexual relationship and continues that relationship in secrecy. It is a gradual, calculated process that ultimately results in the child being coerced into participating in the abuse.

## Grooming behaviors can include:

- Appearing to be someone you can trust and rely on in order to gain access to your child
- Paying extra attention to your child and making your child feel special
- Knowing as much (or more) about what your children like as you do: music, clothing, video games, slang, etc.
- Buying gifts your child will like, with no occasion
- Isolating your child, choosing activities so they can be alone together
- Preying on a family's vulnerabilities, such as substance use disorders, mental health challenges, individuals with disabilities, divorce, financial stress and single parents (especially mothers)
- Choosing careers that involve working with children and spending free time helping children
- Taking advantage of your child's natural curiosity about sex, telling sexual jokes, showing pornography and playing sexual games
- Touching your child in your presence so that your child thinks you are comfortable with the way they are being touched (e.g. lap sitting, tickling, hand holding, etc.)

**Call 508-674-6111 or visit [www.cacofbc.org](http://www.cacofbc.org) for more information**