

“It can’t happen in my family ...”

Sexual abuse occurs at all economic levels, to all ages, both female and male. One out of every four girls and one out of six boys are abused by age 18, and the statistics are growing. Abusers may be strangers but, most often, they are caregivers, friends or relatives.

The first thing to do is assure the child that she or he did the right thing by telling you.

Believe the child. Children rarely invent stories about abuse. Be aware that sexual abuse can be committed by a male or female, and a growing number of abusers are young people under the age of 16.

The next step is to get help. Talk to your pastor, a family doctor or an LSS counselor. Sexual abuse is a crime against a vulnerable person. No child or adult “asks for it.” Many abusers were, themselves, victims and are acting out of their own experience. The vicious cycle of abuse is only stopped by identifying it and dealing with it.

Children need our protection and intervention if there is any suspicion of sexual abuse. Professional help and loving support can help the child to recover from abuse ... with hope for a brighter life.



Lutheran Social Service
for changing lives

Call 651.642.5990 or 1.800.582.5260
for the counseling office nearest you.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota serves all people regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, handicap or age.

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Sexual Abuse of Children

Sexually abused children are told by the offender to keep the behavior a secret. This and other factors may keep a child from telling anyone about it. A child may not know how to tell because she or he lacks the vocabulary ... or fears no one will believe it.

These could be warning signals:

- A sudden change in the child's behavior. This could include bed-wetting, nightmares or discipline problems.
- A reluctance to go to a particular place or be with a particular person, even though previous visits have caused no distress.
- Depression. Weepiness, refusal to get up in the morning, a bleak outlook.
- Using sexual vocabulary he or she is too young to understand or which has not been taught by you; teaching sexual games to other children.
- Needs more reassurance, loss of or sudden gain in appetite, turning against one parent. Older children may also be involved in truancy, drug abuse, delinquency or running away.

Don't be afraid to ask the child some questions ... there could be other issues troubling the child. Sexual abuse is difficult to talk about, especially if a friend or family member is involved.

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