

Contact and Support Information

Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

24 hr Response line

902-425-0122

avaloncentre.ca

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

902-422-4240

South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre

902-494-2432

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Unit

902-429-8167

Victim's Services Emotional Support

HRPD

902-490-5300

Halifax Sexual Health Centre

902-455-9656

Immigrant Services Association of No- va Scotia (ISANS)

902-423-3607

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

902-420-1576



AVALON
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Information for Non-Offending Parents:

A guide for parents of children who have
experienced sexualized violence



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Child Sexual Abuse

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child abuse occurs when an adult or an older child (a person in a position of power and trust) violates a child in any way for sexual gratification. It is the misuse of power and a child's trust.

Child sexual abuse ranges from speaking to a child in a sexually explicit way, to inappropriate touching, to genital contact. Abuse includes the coercion of the child to speak/ sexually act onto the perpetrator.

Sexual abuse is a criminal act. It can have harmful long-term emotional, physical and social effects on a child. The abuse must be stopped and the child may need medical treatment and counselling.

How Common is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is much too common. You and your child are not alone. The majority of cases go undetected because the children are afraid to tell anyone. It is difficult information for a parent to hear and cope with but parents need and deserve help with this process. It is important that parents do not project their feelings of the abuse and abuser onto the child because children tend to adopt the cues and reactions of loved ones.

Possible reactions of the child:

- Fear, and/or insecurity
- Guilt, shame, and/or embarrassment
- Feeling dirty, and/or soiled
- Fear of consequences from abuser, parents, and/or system
- Guilt because some things may have been pleasurable
- Anger, hostility, self-blame, and/or self-doubt
- Uncertainty and/or confusion about what has happened

What Can I Do?

Parent reactions are normal, yet it is important to provide an atmosphere that feels safe physically, psychologically, and emotionally for the child.

There is nothing you can do to change the fact that your child has been sexually abused. In fact, there was probably little you could have done to prevent it. But there is much you can do to lessen the effects and help you and your child cope.

The first step in the healing process is telling about the abuse. As a parent you need to believe your child and do not react in a manner that shames the child. Let the child know you believe them. Seek medical attention for the child if necessary and provide information to the child about what is happening.

Normalize the child's world as much as possible. Don't over focus on the abuse. Let the child know that their feelings/ fears are normal. Reassure the child that they are not to blame for what happened.

Listen to the child. Allow them to express feelings. Respond to questions in a calm and open manner. Do not pressure the child to talk. Give reassurance to the child. Reaffirm the future in hopeful terms. Respect the child's privacy in terms of who you disclose the abuse to.

Be honest, show courage and give love to the child. Report the abuse as soon as possible to the proper authorities as it shows the child that you and other adults believe the abuse happened and take the matter seriously.

Why Didn't They Tell Me?

Children often do not tell their parents about the abuse, instead they tell a favorite relative, teacher, or friend. While it is hard for a parent to understand why a child did not disclose the abuse, or disclose it sooner, there are reasons why this occurs. Children are bribed and threatened by the abuser not to tell the secret. Children often feel they are to blame for the abuse. They are afraid. The important thing is the secret has been told. Now it's time to take action.