



nsw commission for  
children & young people

# Child sexual assault

*Child sexual abuse doesn't just mean sexual intercourse although it is involved. Child sexual abuse involves a range of sexual activity including touching a child on their breasts or penis, masturbating in front of children, flashing or oral sex.*

*Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult or someone bigger than the child uses his or her authority or power over the child, or takes advantage of the child's trust and respect, to involve the child in sexual activity.*

*The offender often uses tricks, bribes, threats, guilt and sometimes physical force to make the child take part and to stop the child from telling anyone about it.*

## Child sexual abuse is a crime

- In 85 per cent of child sexual abuse cases the child knows the offender
- The offender is usually male and can be related to the child eg stepfather, uncle, grandfather or brother. They can often be a family friend or work with children.
- The sexual abuse will continue until someone stops it
- Boys and girls of any ages can be sexually abused
- Children very rarely lie about sexual abuse

## Telling children about sexual abuse

Knowing about sexual abuse helps keep children safe and protects them from it. When adults openly talk with children about sexual abuse and what to do if they are in a threatening situation then they give the child permission to tell.

Children who are sexually abused often find it difficult to tell someone what is

happening to them. The offender actively works to make the child keep it a secret.

Families can help by encouraging a loving environment where children are able to talk openly about their feelings and know that they will be taken seriously.

## Who is to blame?

Child sexual abuse is never anyone's fault but the offender. Child sexual abuse offenders make a variety of excuses for their actions including:

"All fathers do this."

"I was just showing affection."

"It was a one off mistake and won't happen again."

"It was the child's fault - she/he led me on."

"The child's mother is to blame - she should have known about/stopped it."

## Offender Tricks

Child sexual abusers prey on a child but also on those people who are around the child and who can protect the child.

Their practices involve manipulating the system to keep their actions hidden. They may achieve this by threatening the child or people associated with the child.

Offenders can make themselves appear very respectable and may work to undermine the child's reputation so the child won't be believed.

They recruit vulnerable children through bribery then blackmail the child by saying that "they wanted it".

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information

## Teaching children about personal safety

### Trusting your instincts:

- encourage children to trust their feelings.
- explore with children about the things that make them feel safe and happy and what makes them feel scared.
- explain that their bodies can often tell them when they are in danger - they might get a funny feeling in the tummy or they might want to run away.
- explore with children how their bodies feel when they are scared.
- tell them if they do not feel safe they should tell someone they trust straight away.

### Respecting your body:

- use the correct names for sexual parts of the body when you're talking to children about sexual safety.
- explain that their body is their own and that no one has the right to touch them in ways that make them feel scared or uncomfortable.

### About sexual abuse:

- explain to children that sexual abuse can happen with someone in their family or someone they know who tells them it is okay.
- stress to children that if someone touches them in a sexual way it is not their fault and that they should tell someone they trust about it.

### About grown ups:

- explain to them that sometimes grownups do things that are not okay.
- explain that sometimes when they tell a grownup something they might not always understand. Tell them if a grownup says, "Don't be silly" or "I don't believe you", that they should keep telling until someone believes them and does something to help them.

## Making workplaces safe for children

All employers are required by NSW law to conduct 'Working With Children Checks' for people in 'child related' employment.

A person who has been convicted of a serious sex offence is prohibited from working with children.

The check also involves looking at national criminal records on applicants applying for child related employment to check for child abuse, child pornography, sexual activity, acts of indecency, relevant Apprehended Violence Orders and relevant disciplinary proceedings.

This is to help ensure that people who may pose a risk to children are not employed in roles where they have direct, unsupervised contact with children.

## Child sex offenders:

- are usually very ordinary people from any background
- they can hold any position within the community
- they are often well respected, making it much more difficult for a child to tell someone
- they are usually male
- they are often related to the child or are a family friend
- they are always very careful to ensure they are not suspected of child sexual abuse

## Responding to child sexual abuse

Everyone reacts differently to a traumatic event especially if it involves divided loyalties between a child and a family member or co-worker.

There may be guilt that the abuse wasn't seen, predicted or prevented. There may also be considerable fear about the potential effect on the family or workplace if the allegation is reported.

People need time to come to terms with what has happened and to be able to recover at their own pace. It is very important that everyone involved is given a lot of help and support.

Children and their families should get professional support to help them understand that the offender is responsible and to avoid blaming and hurting each other.

## If a child tells you about abuse you should:

- listen to the child's story
- comfort the child if they are distressed
- let the child know you're glad they told you
- let the child know you are going to get help about what to do next

Seek professional assistance as soon as possible or contact one of the following help lines:

DoCS Help Line	13 21 11
Parent Line	13 20 55
Kids Help Line	1800 55 1800