



## SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY GRADE CHILDREN

Today your child was provided an important safety program presented by a teacher, administrator, or counselor who works at your child's school or PSR program. This program taught your child that certain areas of his or her body are private. Your child was taught three steps to take if anyone tries to touch the private areas of his or her body or tries to get your child to touch the other person's private body areas. These steps are:

- 1) Say NO or STOP using a big voice**
- 2) Get away from the unsafe person**
- 3) Tell a safe adult, such as a parent or teacher that they trust.**

It was explained that sometimes, parents and medical professionals may touch the private areas of their body if there are health concerns. This information sheet is provided in order to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child. Please review the information. Your child was also provided a handout of safety rules that you may review together.

### STEP 1: KNOW THE FACTS

- In America, before reaching adulthood, one in four females and one in eight males experiences child sexual abuse.
- Children can experience sexual victimization from adults, from teenagers, or from children their own age.
- Studies show that about 10% of child sexual abuse is committed by strangers, 30% by family members, and about 60% by others known to the child or family.
- Child predators often spend time "grooming" their victims. This means that they get the child accustomed to non-sexual touches; develop a special, friendly relationship with the child; and get to know and earn the trust of the child's family. Grooming is aimed toward lessening the chances that a child will tell that he or she has been abused and, if they tell, that they will be believed.
- Today, grooming is often accomplished online. Child predators collect information via youth's social media profiles and begin the process of building an online relationship with the child. Predators may send children online "gifts," such as game credits, and ask for online favors, such as photographs and personal information about the child.
- Child sex trafficking can happen to any youth. It can often start online, as youth are pressured to provide photos, videos, or webcam access of themselves, sometimes in exchange for cash, gifts, or game credits.

### Warning Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse of a Young Child

- Draws artwork of sexual body parts and/or sexual acts
- Demonstrates age-inappropriate sexualized play with toys, dolls, self or others
- Has odd or excessive itching or pain in their genital or anal body areas, with or without obvious injury
- Has frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Demonstrates inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior
- Shows unusual fear of or has a sudden reluctance to be alone with a certain person
- Asks other children to behave sexually or play sexual games
- A sexually abused child may or may not show physical signs of injury from abuse.

## STEP 2: EDUCATE YOUR CHILD

For many people, it is not easy to have a discussion about personal body safety with their children. If this is true for you, then you are not alone! It can feel awkward to discuss these issues, but doing so is very important. It could save your child from sexual mistreatment and the physical and emotional damage that comes from it.

- Choose times to speak to your child that are relaxed and unhurried. Show with your tone of voice that this is an important topic, but not a scary one. Remember, just as you would speak to your children about other safety issues regularly, this discussion should take place more than once!
- Be honest with your child that there are people who are inappropriate toward children. These people may try to touch children on the private areas of their bodies or get children to touch them. Sometimes these people may show inappropriate photos or videos, such as pornography, to children.
- Share with your child what to do if anyone tries to touch or interact with them in a way that makes your child feel uncomfortable. The three steps your child should take are:
  - 1) **Say NO or STOP using a strong voice.**
  - 2) **Get away from the unsafe person.**
  - 3) **Tell you or another safe adult what happened.**

Share with your child that these steps apply no matter the other person's age or gender, and no matter if the child knows the person or if they are a stranger.

- Educate your child to beware of anyone online who asks to meet them or offers to pay them cash, gifts, or game credits for your child to provide photos, videos, or webcam access of him or herself. This can be the start of child sex trafficking.
- Describe to your child the difference between a *secret* and a *surprise*. A secret is something you are never supposed to tell while a surprise will be shared with everyone at a certain time (for example, at a party or on a holiday). Teach your child that no one should ever ask them to keep a secret from you. Share that they can always tell you anything, even if someone else told them not to tell.
- Explain to your child that unsafe adults sometimes use tricks to lure kids into going with them. They should never go with a stranger, even if the stranger says something like:
  - The stranger has lost his or her pet and needs your child's help to find it.
  - The stranger is lost and needs directions.
  - Your child's mom or dad is hurt or sick and told the stranger to pick up the child.
  - Your child has won a contest or is invited to a "modeling tryout."

Share that these are common ways that unsafe adults try to get children to go with them. Safe adults never ask children whom they don't know for help or directions.

## STEP 3: TAKE ACTION

**SCREEN** babysitters and caregivers. Be very careful who has access to your children. Check their references. Once you have chosen a caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how their experience with the caregiver was, and carefully listen to their responses.

**RESPECT** your child's fear of or discomfort around a certain person, even if this is a person you normally trust.

**REPORT** any suspicions immediately. If you notice an adult with suspicious behaviors, like the warning signs listed above, report your concerns to someone in charge of the school or program involved. If you believe your child has been abused, contact your child's pediatrician or child protective services at **1-800-392-3738**.

*Most importantly, **BELIEVE YOUR CHILD** if they report inappropriate behavior to you, even if they report someone you know and normally trust. Children must overcome a great deal of hurt and fear to report sexual abuse. If your child ever reports to you that someone has touched him or her inappropriately, *listen to them, believe them, show your love and support for them*, and report your concerns to the appropriate authorities.*