



Child Sexual Abuse Prevention:

Preparing Communities to identify, prevent and respond to Child Sexual Abuse



Who We Are

At Kerengende, we believe that girls who have experienced sexual trauma are more resilient when their families don't feel alone. Every day, we help these families through building a healing community connected to information, support resources, and education. Because as our communities continue to learn how best to support girls and families in need, we are stronger together.

Kerengende Foundation is committed to ensuring parents and the caregivers of children understand the magnitude of sexual abuse and are empowered with tools to prevent it. Our greatest hope is that adults who care for children will be able to identify concerning, pre-offending behaviors, understand the grooming process of sexual predators and know how to respond to the suspected and reported sexual abuse of children.

It's OUR responsibility to protect OUR children. Please use this information as a tool to create dialogue and awareness with your family and community to stop the devastating impact that sexual abuse has on the children in our communities.



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Concerning “Pre-Offending” Behaviors

Prevention efforts are greatly improved when adults and informed communities are able to recognize suspicious attitudes and patterns of behavior and take action. When adults know when and how to safely confront someone who is engaged in pre-offending behaviors, they can help stop abuse before it occurs.

Before we define and discuss child sexual abuse, we would like you to understand the concerning behaviors that are considered “pre-offending behaviors.” In these situations, abuse may not have occurred yet, so a conversation with the person exhibiting these concerning behaviors may be a good and safe option, and will hopefully prevent future abuse.

Examples of Concerning Behaviors:

- Uses inappropriate language and topics around children
- Has secretive relationships with children either in person or on-line
- Spends so much time with a child that they are isolated from others (including parents)
- Does not allow the child to set boundaries
- Excessive hugging and touching or making children sit on their laps
- Does not respect/follow household rules
- Asking a child to keep a secret
- Offering alcohol or drugs to minors
- Exhibiting behaviors that make others uncomfortable
- Sexual harassment and intimidation

What to do if you witness concerning behaviors?

- Trust your gut
- Remove the child from the situation
- Ask the person to stop the behavior
- Express concern for all involved
- Talk to your child about the boundary violation
- Escalate your concern to others such as family, neighbors, or organization leadership, if needed
- Report your concern to authorities, if abuse is suspected or if they refuse to stop

Always encourage your child to trust their gut, and that if something feels uncomfortable or wrong, then it probably is. Remind your child that if these things ever happen to them or someone they know, they won't be in trouble if they tell.

Children should not be forced to hug or kiss family members or other adults if they do not want to. Allowing your child to voice their personal boundaries teaches them that it's okay and encouraged to say no and that there are other forms of affection, such as waving, high fives or fist bumps.

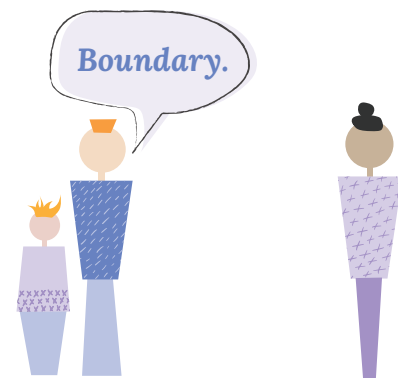
When interrupting concerning behaviors, it's NOT important for you to understand the intentions of the person exhibiting these behaviors. However, it's imperative that when you engage them, you set a clear boundary and describe the questionable behaviors. It is okay for you to intervene publicly. Intervening publicly creates a culture of being bold in our efforts to protect children. It also reminds children that YOU are there to protect them and that these are boundaries that they can and should set in the future.



When calling out a boundary violation be sure to:

- Be clear in your description of the boundaries crossed to the individual who has crossed it
- Define the limit to the person who has crossed the boundary
- Keep it movin'

"Keep it movin'" just means you do not have to engage in conflict or arguments with the individual. Just set the limit and move on. The space may feel awkward and you may feel the need to further explain or apologize to the person for the discomfort the conversation has caused them. Don't. I encourage you not to. Let them be uncomfortable and let that discomfort serve as a reminder to them to not behave this way in the future.





Examples of how to Intervene

Describe the behavior: “We do not allow adults to ride alone in the car with a child.”

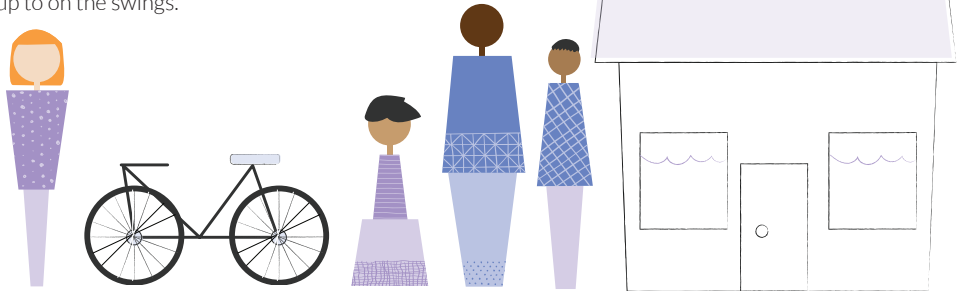
Define the limit: “You can take Marcus home from the youth group only if there is another counselor, not related to you, who can ride in the car.”

Keep it Movin’: “Victoria and I will wait here with him until his mother can pick him up.”

Describe the behavior: “I saw Chelsea say she did not want to hug you and she appeared uncomfortable when you picked her up.”

Define the limit: “Please stop and put her down. We teach her that she gets to say who she wants to hug and how she wants to be touched.”

Keep it movin’: “Chelsea, let’s go see what Milo is up to on the swings.”



What is Grooming?

Grooming is the process during which a sexual offender engages a child by gaining his or her trust in order to sexually abuse the child and maintain secrecy. The offender may also groom the parents and community of the child by persuading them of his or her trustworthiness with children.

The process of grooming may last weeks, months or even years to break through a child’s defenses and increase the child’s acceptance of physical contact.

The grooming process may include:

Targeting the Victim

Sexual offenders test for vulnerability and look for emotional neediness, isolation, and low self-confidence, as well as minimal parental attention. Single parents are more likely to be targeted because they often rely on the support of their community to assist with childcare.

Gaining the Child's Trust

Offenders watch and get to know their victims and their needs, as well as how to fulfill them. The predator may ask the child to keep secrets or maintain the child's secrets to build trust with the child and distance the child from his or her parents, caregivers and community. For example, allowing the child to do something their parents or caregivers would not approve of.

Filling a Need

Once the offender learns how to fill the child's needs with affection, gifts attention or in some cases, simply meeting their basic needs, they take on a more important role in the child's life.

Isolating the Child

The predator may offer to give rides, babysit the children for free or do other favors in order to be alone with children without adult interruption. Parents may unknowingly encourage this by appreciating the needed help and support.

Sexualizing Interactions

Grooming often begins with nonsexual touching, such as "accidental" or playful touching to desensitize the child so the child does not question a more sexualized touch. The offender then exploits the child's curiosity to advance sexual interactions.

Maintaining Control

Predators may use threats and guilt to enforce secrecy and force the child's continued participation and silence: "If you tell your mother what happened, she'll hate you. We're cheating on her" or "If you tell anyone, I'll hurt someone in the family." The offender may use the child's love for them to maintain secrecy by telling the child, "If you tell, they'll put me in jail. You don't want me to go to jail do you? ". The abuser may also blame the child for "allowing" it to happen and making the child believe that they were a willing participant.



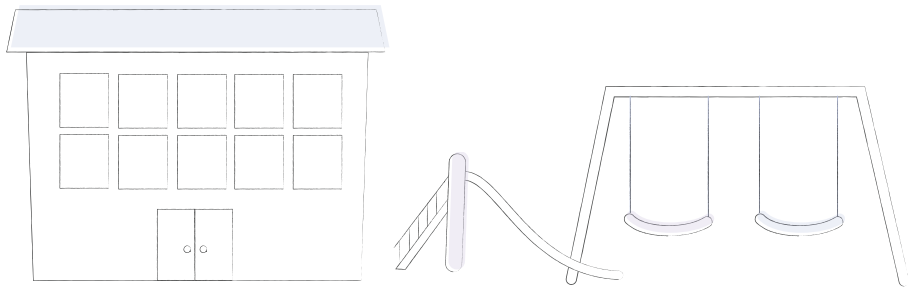
Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a major public health problem. About 1 in every 4 girls and 1 in every 6 boys in the US experience sexual abuse at some point during their childhood. The majority of sexual abuse is committed by someone that the child and their family knows. The long-term emotional and physical damage after sexual abuse can be devastating to the child and the community that loves them.

Children who experience sexual abuse and other “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs, 2021) such as physical abuse or neglect, have a higher chance of developing depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, drug addiction, and suicidal behaviors later in life (CDC, 2021).

Silverman, Rinehurst, and Giaconia (1996) found, The longer the sexual abuse, the more negatively it impacts a child’s emotional and physical growth and development. Child victims of long periods of sexual abuse often develop low self-esteem, a feeling of worthlessness and an abnormal view of sex. The child may become withdrawn and mistrustful of adults, depressed, intentionally harm themselves, and/or become suicidal.

Some children who have been sexually abused display sexualized behaviors which are not appropriate for their age and may try to pressure siblings or peers into sexual behavior. Sexually abused children have an increased vulnerability to be commercially sexually exploited in the future.



What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is a sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors when there is a power differential such as age, size, emotional maturity, advanced sexual knowledge, force, threats, bribery or coercion.

30-40% of sexual abuse happens at the hands of another minor.

What is considered a Sexual Act?

1. Contact Sexual Abuse

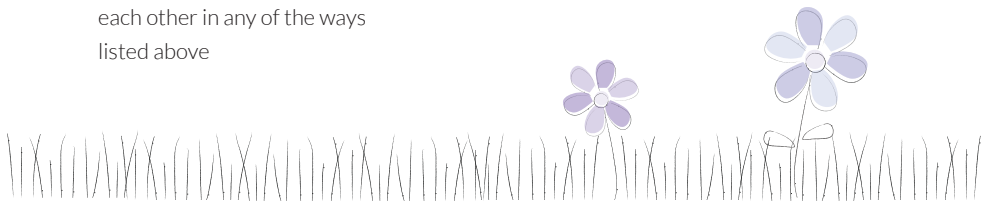
- Inappropriately touching a child's private parts
- An adult forcing or coercing a child to touch their private parts or someone else's private parts
- Oral to genital contact in either direction, also considered oral rape
- Vaginal or anal rape or any penetration with objects of body parts
- Prolonged or open mouthed kissing
- Forcing or coercing children to touch each other in any of the ways listed above

2. Visual Sexual Abuse

- Voyeurism (watching a child undress, bathe, or go to the bathroom)
- Exhibitionism (exposing oneself or others' private parts to a child)
- Asking a child to play sexual games and expose themselves
- Showing pornography or making a child listen to or watch sexual acts
- Masturbating in front of children
- Taking sexual pictures of children or of others in front of children
- Viewing, creating, buying or selling Child Sex Abuse Material (CSAM)

3. Verbal Sexual Abuse

- Using obscene or sexual language around children with the intent of sexual gratification
- Talking about specific sexual acts
- Sharing sexual experiences

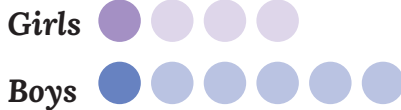


How Big is This Problem?

Child Sexual Abuse Statistics

(TAALK.org, 2020)

1 in 4 girls and **1 in 6 boys** are sexually abused before their 18th birthday



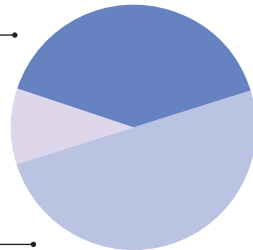
Who's Vulnerable?

- Children of all ages
- Girls and Boys
- At-risk children include those families who have experienced single parenting, illness, violence, death, poverty, addictions, other types of abuse, crime, depression, suicide, lack of time and affection, or other challenges
- Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable

30-40% of victims are abused by a family member

Another **50%** by someone they know and trust

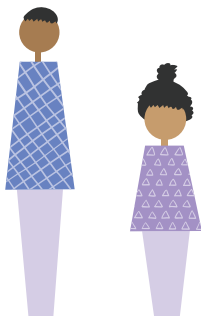
Less than **10%** are abused by strangers



Potential Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

Physical (RAINN.org, 2019)

- Complaints of pain during urination or bowel movements
- Symptoms of genital or urinary tract infections or STDs such as offensive odor, redness, rashes or burning
- Bleeding, bruises, or swelling in genital area
- Bloody, torn, or stained underclothes
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Pain, itching, or burning in genital area
- Evidence of physical trauma to the genital or anal areas
- Health issues associated with anxiety such as chronic stomach pain or headaches
- Self mutilation (puncturing, cutting, burning)



Potential Emotional or Behavioral Signs

- Aggressive behavior towards friends and family
- Withdrawal from friends, family or activities they previously enjoyed
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Fear of certain people, places or activities
- Excessive sadness, depression or suicide attempts
- Changes in hygiene, such as refusing to bathe or bathing excessively
- Develops phobias
- Exhibits signs of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Expresses suicidal thoughts, especially in adolescents
- Has trouble in school, such as absences or drops in grades
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviors
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Overly protective and concerned for siblings, or assumes a caretaker role
- Returns to regressive behaviors, such as thumb sucking
- Runs away from home or school
- Self-harms
- Seems threatened by physical contact

Potential Sexual Signs

- Increased questions about human sexuality
- Excessive masturbation
- Increased sexual play with friends, pets, toys
- Talking about or acting out specific adult sexual acts
- Increased choice of sexually revealing clothing or covering up
- Signs of promiscuity
- Teen pregnancy

Who are Potential Offenders?

- Men
- Women
- Children
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Aunts/Uncles
- Siblings
- Family Friends
- Children's Friends
- Neighbors
- Babysitters
- Teachers
- Faith Leaders
- Coaches
- Doctors
- Strangers



What Can You Do?

If Sexual Abuse has Occurred

- Protect the child if possible and as necessary
- Do NOT confront the offender/do not put yourself in harm's way
- Immediately report your concern to authorities

If you Witnessed Sexual Abuse

- Treat it as a crime in progress
- Call the police immediately (911)
- Interrupt the crime and attempt to protect the child
- Stay with the child until the authorities arrive
- Make note of the environment/evidence
 - Identity/description of victim and suspect
 - Date, time, location
 - What you saw (in detail)
 - Words exchanged

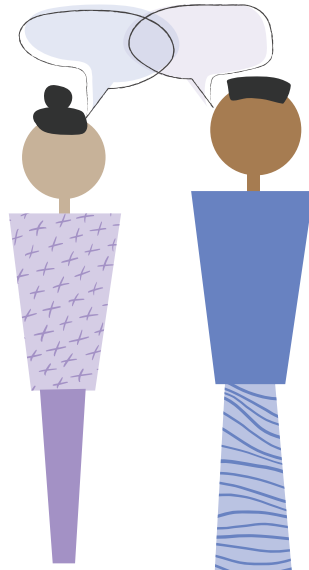


If A Child Disclosed Sexual Abuse

- Restrict access if possible
- Let the child know that you believe them
- Let them know that it's safe to talk to you about it and It's NOT their fault
- Explain that you will need to tell
- Explain that you will try to get them and their offender help
- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Gather basic information - who, what, where, when.
- Ask only open-ended questions like:
 - "Tell me more about that"
 - "What happened?
What happened next?"
 - "Where were you?"
 - "Who was with you?"
 - "Who else knows this has happened?"
- Do not act shocked or emotional, be calm and try to control your facial expressions
- Report to Child Protective Services (where the child lives) AND law enforcement (where the crime occurred)
- Protect the child from the offender if possible but do not confront the offender without the authorities

If you Suspect Child Sexual Abuse

- Restrict access if possible until you learn more
- Start assessing the people who have access
- Let the child know why you're concerned
- Talk to the child's parents, if abuse is suspected outside of the family
- Report to the authorities, if the abuse is suspected inside or outside of the family



What you can do to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

- Control who has access to your kids
- Set and share behavioral boundary expectations with kids and other adults
- Teach kids sexual boundaries
- Empower kids to expect behavioral boundaries and sexual boundaries to be honored
- Provide kids multiple ways to report that they've been harmed
- Actively assess the risk
- Respond boldly and appropriately





Commercial Sexual Exploitation

There has been an increased focus and awareness on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and sex trafficking. Unfortunately, many of us believe that CSEC occurs when children are kidnapped off the street, thrown into a white van with dark windows and sold into slavery. While we see this representation of CSEC on television the reality of it hits much closer to home.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSEC) refers to crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of children for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person.

CSEC also includes situations where a child, whether or not at the direction of any other person, engages in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value, which includes non-monetary things such as food, shelter, drugs, or protection. Children forced to engage in “survival sex” are not consenting to the sexual act. They are coerced into these acts to get their basic human needs met.

CSEC is a form of child abuse. It is a serious crime that occurs at rates much higher than one would assume. Exploiters and pimps target vulnerable youth, many of whom have histories of previous abuse, neglect, homelessness and familial instability. What initially seems like love (remember the grooming process?) and security often turns into violence, manipulation, and control, making it difficult for youth to seek help, identify as victims and escape.

CSEC disproportionately affects youth of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth, and girls.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Definitions

Child — A person younger than the age of 18 is considered a child under U.S. law.

Trafficker — Any person who benefits in cash or goods by pimping, trafficking, recruiting, restraining, advertising, recording, filming, coordinating, housing, transporting, selling or otherwise making a child available to a third person or persons for sexual purposes.

Sex Trafficking — The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 defines “sex trafficking” as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for a commercial sex act. Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.

Survival Sex — Individuals who have traded sex acts (including prostitution, stripping, pornography, etc.) to meet the basic needs for survival (i.e., food, shelter, safety, etc.) without the overt force, fraud or coercion of a trafficker, but who felt that their circumstances left little or no other option.

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) — Any visual or audio material of a child engaged in real or simulated sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child, the dominant characteristic of which is depiction for a sexual purpose.

Examples of crimes and acts that constitute CSEC:

- Child sex trafficking/the prostitution of children
- Child sex tourism involving commercial sexual activity
- Commercial production of CSAM
- Online transmission of live video of a child engaged in sexual activity in exchange for anything of value

As you can see from the examples above, a child does not have to leave their home to be sexually exploited and trafficked. A child can be trafficked from their own bedroom by family members or “caregivers”.





Indicators of CSEC

These are common indicators that may help in identifying children/youth who are at-risk of or are being commercially sexually exploited. These indicators may not ALWAYS mean a child is a victim of CSEC.

- Behaviors including fear, anxiety, depression, submission, tension and/or nervousness
- Behaviors such as “hyper-vigilance”
- Tattoos (“branding”) typically on wrist, shoulder blade or chest
- Indicators that child/youth is lying about their age or name, fake ID, no ID
- Evidence of controlling or dominating relationships
- Possession of multiple cell phones, hotel room keys
- Frequent running away, skipping school (truancy)
- Family dysfunction (family violence, history of child abuse/neglect, alcohol/drug abuse)
- Expressing interest in or are in relationships with older men or adults
- Visible signs of abuse such as unexplained bruises, black eye(s), cuts or marks

Online CSEC

Online sexual exploitation and abuse is when one person manipulates another person to get them to do something sexual. It becomes a cycle of emotional and psychological abuse. This can include things such as forcing or blackmailing a child into sending sexual photos/videos of themselves online or to perform sexual acts over webcam.

Online sexual exploitation and abuse is illegal.

Report Human Trafficking

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911. For more resources for victims of human trafficking, contact the

National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call: 1-888-373-788 (TTY: 711)

Text: 233733

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®

To report information about a missing or exploited child

1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

Report child sexual exploitation online at [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org).

Summary

Check in with the children in your life daily. If your child is involved in after-school activities like sports, a club or spends time at a friend's house, it's important to know what's going on when they are away from home. Ask your child open-ended questions about their day, including what they did at recess, during class and after school. Give them a chance to share about their day and express wins, worries or concerns. Let them know that you care about what's important to them, and that it's okay to feel frustrated, upset or sad about what's happening in their world.

Again, sex offenders will try to “fill a void” in a child's life to gain trust from them. Our love, attention and interest in our children's lives cannot be that void. We are the first line of defense for the children in our lives. Be vigilant. Be bold and be willing to speak up and speak out when you see concerning behaviors. We must view All children as worthy of being protected.

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National Prevention Resources

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

www.rainn.org

24 Hour Hotline: 1(800) 656-HOPE (4673)

National Center for Missing & Exploited

Children's CyberTipline

Call 1-800-843-5678

Darkness to Light

www.d2l.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

Call or text 1.800.4.A.CHILD (1.800.422.4453).

Illinois State Resources

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

Hotline: 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873)

or (217) 785-4020

Department of Children and Family Services

www2.illinois.gov/dcfcs/safekids

Illinois Department of Human Services

www.dhs.state.il.us

Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault

(217) 753-4117

Kerengende Foundation

Kerengendefoundation.org

(618) 767-4526

Children's Advocacy Center's of Illinois

www.childrensadvocacycentersofillinois.org

Local Resources

Dial 211 for local resources

911 for emergencies