

You are not **ALONE**

Contrary to popular belief, sexual abuse is not a rare occurrence nor is it confined to any one social class, ethnic group, or religious background. It can occur in any family, and it happens more than we would like to think it does.

There are many resources in our community to help you through this crisis.

Resources

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

It is of the utmost importance that you let your child know that you believe him/her and that he/she was right to come forward about the "secret". Your child will require a great deal of reassurance at this time. This may be extremely difficult for you, due to the mixed emotions you are experiencing.

It is not advised to confront the offender. Handling the situation in this manner may also magnify the child's guilt.

COUNSELING

The problem will not go away on its own! There is counseling available for the victim of sexual abuse, their siblings and parents- all of whom should be strongly considered.

With counseling, love and understanding, your child will be better equipped to deal with the trauma, and this will give the him/her a better outlook on themselves and on life.

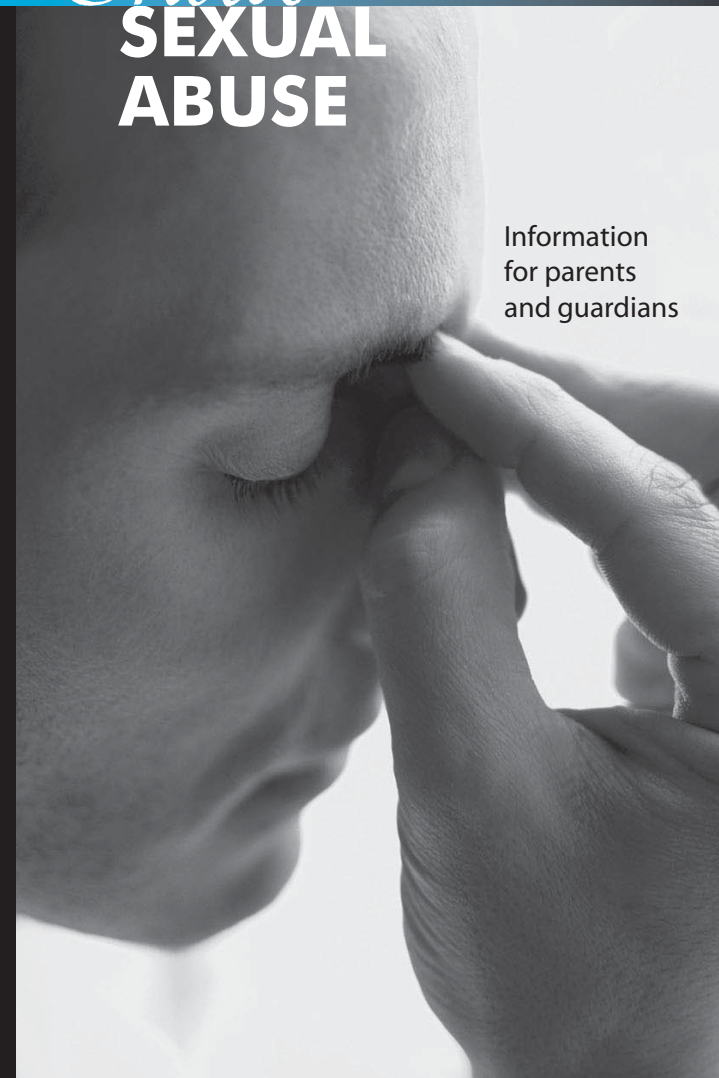
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?

After disclosure, your family may be in a crisis situation. You will no doubt be feeling exhausted and confused by this time.

You should feel free to call the Victim/Witness Assistance Bureau with any questions and concerns.

Child **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Information
for parents
and guardians




Office of the Tulare County District Attorney
Victim Witness Assistance Bureau
221 S. Mooney Blvd, Room 264
Visalia, CA 93291 (559) 733-6754
Porterville (559) 782-4835

Phillip J. Cline Tulare County District Attorney



**Office of the Tulare County
District Attorney**
221 S. Mooney Boulevard
Visalia, CA 93291
(559) 733-6411



What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault or sexual exploitation of a minor. Victims range in age from less than one year through adolescence. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad spectrum of behavior and may consist of many acts over long periods of time or a single incident. Sexual abuse includes:

- ◆ sexual touching and fondling
- ◆ exposing a child to pornographic materials or adult sexual activity
- ◆ having a child pose, undress or perform in a sexual fashion.
- ◆ rape or attempted rape

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

Approximately 75% of sexually abused children are victims of family members or friends, and 95% of all offenders are male- in most cases the father or father figure, but also a grandfather, uncle, brother, or friend.

WHY DID THE CHILD NOT TELL ME?

The child did not tell you because he/she was afraid to tell you. Children are afraid no one will believe them, especially since many abusers tell children this. They don't tell because they feel guilty they might get an adult "in trouble". The child may have been bribed or threatened by the offender and would therefore be afraid that the threats would be carried out (e.g. "If you tell I will go to jail, it will ruin the family", and so on).

Children are taught to be obedient. The child would therefore be frightened to speak about the "secret" due to the feelings of guilt he/she would then have to experience. The guilt may surround both the abusive relationship itself, and the guilt for telling someone about it.

WHAT IS YOUR CHILD FEELING?

Your child may be experiencing feelings of :

SELF BLAME...

- ◆ that the offender carried out these actions because he/she was bad, or was somehow deserving of the abuse
- ◆ that he/she should not have let it happen (didn't we talk about "good touches" and "bad touches" in school? I should have known what to do)
- ◆ that whatever happens within the family now (tension, arguments) is his/her fault because they told someone about the secret.

FEAR...

- ◆ that now that he/she has told someone, the offender will somehow retaliate (hurt the child or someone else in the family or close to them)
- ◆ that the family and those outside the family will not believe him/her and will not like or care for him/her any longer
- ◆ that he/she will be sent away
- ◆ that mom/dad will become very ill
- ◆ that he/she will be blamed
- ◆ that mom and dad will be very angry with him/her

BETRAYAL...

- ◆ that the offender has betrayed the child's trust
- ◆ that mom and dad should have known, and put a stop to it.

The child will require constant reassurance that he/she is not to blame for what happened, that he/she is loved, and will be protected from further abuse.

WHAT ARE YOU FEELING?

LONELINESS...

One of the most typical feelings is loneliness. The feeling that your situation is one in a million; that this does not happen to other people; that no one will understand, no one will be able to help, and that no one will want anything further to do with you or your family.

ANGER...

- ◆ at the offender for what he has done to your child
- ◆ at the child, for letting the offender abuse him/her (even though you know that the child is not responsible)
- ◆ at the child for telling you about the abuse, thus leaving you the worry as to what to do about the child, the family, the offender, and yourself (even though you know the child did the right thing).

HURT...

- ◆ that someone you trusted could do this to your child;
- ◆ that your child has had to experience this abuse;
- ◆ that your child perhaps told someone other than yourself first (i.e. a teacher, a friend or parents of a friend)

DESPERATION & CONFUSION...

- ◆ as to what to do now, for the child, for yourself, for the family
- ◆ should you confront the offender?
- ◆ who do you tell?
- ◆ where should you go?
- ◆ everything has fallen into your lap.
- ◆ where do you start?

FAILURE...

- ◆ that you have somehow failed as a parent, as a person

These feelings are common in parents of child abuse victims. You may ask yourself, "How did I not know?" You may have been at home or you may have been out. It would not have mattered. If the offender is intent on sexually abusing a child, he will find the time to do it.