

## Keep us safe

- Talk to us about appropriate boundaries in our homes, schools and social settings.
- If you do not know what to do to help us, find someone who does know.
- Believe us when we tell you what's going on.
- Help us determine who is a trusted adult.
- Encourage us to tell someone.
- Teach us how to ask for help.
- Support us in our decision to talk about what's going on.
- If you're concerned that something is happening, talk to someone about it.
- If you feel something is not right, don't deny your feelings. Look into it further.
- Denial is dangerous and deprives us of our childhood.
- Remind us that our bodies belong to us, and we have the right to 'no'.
- Teach us the correct words for our "private parts".

## The Child Advocacy Task Force of the Action Alliance

The Child Advocacy Task Force is a statewide collaboration to promote a healthy environment free of sexual and domestic violence for all children.

For more information, call 804.377.0335 or visit [www.vsdvalliance.org](http://www.vsdvalliance.org).

## For more information



**1.800.838.8238** V/TTY  
Free. Confidential. 24 hours a day.

## Resources in your area:

This brochure was developed by the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance Child Advocacy Task Force.

## Kids and sexual abuse

A look at sexual abuse from a kid's perspective and what we all can do to help keep kids safe.

**“I didn’t know it was wrong. I thought he was protecting me.”**

-15 year-old survivor of sexual abuse



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence  
**ACTION ALLIANCE**  
[kids and SV brochure]

• He makes me feel special. • I try to stay busy after school so I don't have to go home. • She told me this was our "special secret" • I didn't know it was wrong • I trusted her • He said I wanted it • He said it was to protect me • It felt weird that he was touching me there • It just didn't feel right • I thought it was normal • He said it was only a picture and he wouldn't send it out.

## Did you know?

- We can be victimized by other children or adults, at home, in school, or in other "safe" places.
- Someone we trust could be sexually abusing us.
- We can be exposed to "peeping toms" (voyeurism), unwelcomed sexual touching and fondling, exposure of genitals (exhibitionism), exposure to pornography, oral/anal/vaginal penetration, and sexting.
- Sexual abuse isn't just physical.

## We are being sexually abused when...

Someone in our home or someone we trust is:

- Asking us to do things that makes us feel uncomfortable.
- Telling us to keep secrets from you.

*Our instincts tell us this behavior is not okay.  
Please pay attention to our behaviors and what's happening around you.*

## Listen to us...

- Believe us.
- Don't shame us.
- Don't pressure us.
- Make us feel safe.
- Pay attention to our non-verbal behavior.
- Don't make us feel guilty.
- Do something about it.
- Speak up for us.
- Remain calm and listen.

## We sometimes don't tell you because...

- We feel alone.
- We feel ashamed.
- We are confused.
- We feel helpless.
- We are just learning what love is.
- We feel special and don't know the abuser is isolating us from trusted adults.
- We worry that the abuser might get in trouble.
- We don't know how to put it in words.
- We are confused by the attention we are getting.
- We love and trust the abuser.
- We don't know that what the abuser is doing is wrong.
- We think it's our fault.

## How many children are exposed to sexual violence?

In a statewide survey of adults in Virginia, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men said they had been sexually victimized as children.

Over half (51%) of women experienced sexual assault before the age of 13, as did 39% of men.

[Source: *Childhood Sexual Assault Victimization in Virginia*, Division for Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health, August 2004.]

## And for you grown-ups out there...

Some of us respond differently to violence, but these are some of the ways we might react:

### In our bodies:

It hurts down there.  
My private parts hurt.  
I don't feel like eating these days.  
I eat to take away the pain.  
My head hurts.  
My stomach hurts.  
It hurts when I go to the bathroom.  
I sometimes walk differently.

### In our actions:

I know too much about sex for my age.  
I'm interested in sexual activities.  
I don't feel like being around people.  
I don't like it when people hug or touch me.  
I can't sleep.  
I do more after-school activities so I don't have to go home.  
I might try to injure myself.

### In our emotions:

I feel angry.  
I can't focus on schoolwork.  
I feel overwhelmed.  
I'm sad and feel alone.  
I am more aggressive.  
I feel guilty.