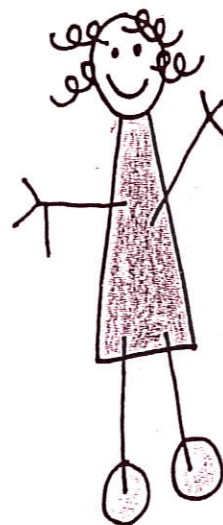
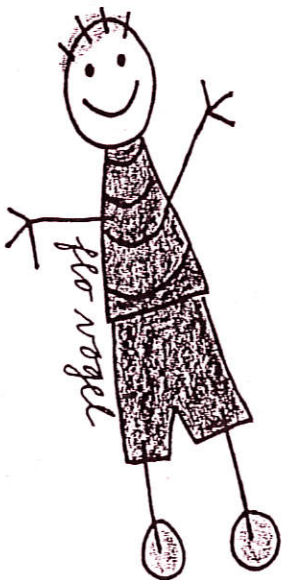


PARENT HANDBOOK

Sanilac County
CHILD
ADVOCACY
CENTER

where small
voices
will be
heard



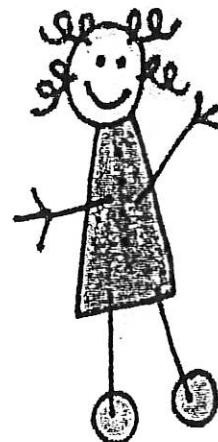
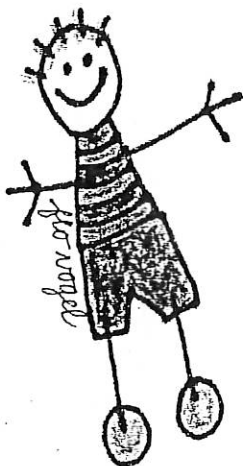
171 Dawson Street. Sandusky, Michigan 48471

OUR MISSION

The Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center works toward the **PREVENTION** and ultimate **ELIMINATION** of child abuse and neglect and strives to protect the dignity of all children.

Sanilac County CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

where small
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171 Dawson Street • Sandusky, Michigan 48471

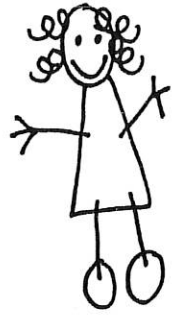
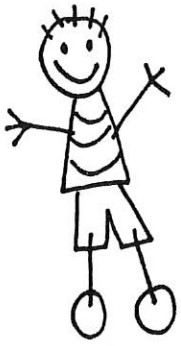
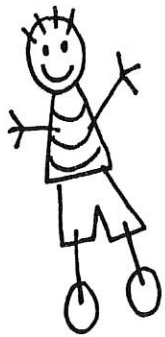


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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to give parents and caregivers clear answers to some questions they may have about sexual abuse and their visit to the Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center. We hope that you will find it helpful and informative. Our staff is also available to answer any other questions you may have.

Welcome to the Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center

The primary goal of the Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center {CAC}, as well as all CAC's, is to ensure that children are not further victimized by intervention systems designed to protect them. Such a center fully compliments our belief that "It shouldn't hurt to be a child."

The CAC model is a child-focused, facility-based program in which representatives from many disciplines- law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy- work together to make team decisions about the investigation, treatment, management and prosecution of child abuse cases. The center is a child friendly environment that is designed to reduce the number of interviews and stress on a child.

All children interviewed at the CAC must be referred by law enforcement or Children's Protective Services. All of the advocacy center's services are provided at no cost to the family or referring agency.

What is child sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse, also known as molestation, occurs whenever a child is forced or pressured by an adult, into any form of sexual contact. Sexual contact can include but is not limited to fondling, oral-genitalia stimulation, intercourse, indecent exposure of the genitals to a child, physical contact with the child's genitals, or even viewing of the child's genitalia without physical contact.

There are two types of abusers. The first, **preferential**, is an adult with a true sexual preference for children. They are typically referred to as a pedophile; someone who has a sexual attraction to prepubescent children. They typically have multiple victims and collect child pornography. According to the Mayo Clinic, approximately 95% of child sexual abuse incidents are committed by offenders who meet the diagnostic criteria for a pedophile. A **situational** abuser is the second type and may not have a true sexual preference for children, but may engage in abuse because of the child's availability.

Sexual abuse of children by adults or other children is a widespread problem. According to National Association to Prevent Sexual Abuse of Children, one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused by their eighteenth birthday, and the average age of a victim of sexual abuse is 9. Shockingly, most of these children will be abused by someone they know and trust. Not all children will immediately tell someone if they have been abused.



Who is the abuser?

There is no such thing as a "typical" abuser. They come from all age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic groups. The majority of abusers are someone the child knows and trusts. They could be a family member, neighbor, relative, babysitter, or family friend. Both men and women are abusers, although the majority of them are men. The abuser usually tries to control the victim through threats, force or pressure, or by making the child feel responsible for the abuse. According to Darkness to Light, a website dedicated to confronting child sexual abuse with courage, nearly 70% of abusers have between 1 and 9 victims and at least 20% have 10 to 40 victims. An average serial child molester may have as many as 400 victims in their lifetime.

How do I know if my child is being sexually abused?

One sign alone cannot tell you if your child is being abused, but if you notice several behavioral and/or physical signs, take action.

Behavioral/Physical symptoms to look for include but are not limited to:

- The single most important indicator of sexual abuse is the child's report that it took place.
- Knowing more about sexual behaviors than a typical child their age.
- Acting out sexually.
- Sudden development of fears or frequent nightmares.
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns.



- Odd or unusual bathroom behaviors.
- Regression in potty training.
- A return to infant-like behaviors (ex. Sucking thumb, wanting a bottle).
- Frequent headaches/stomaches.
- Bloody or stained underwear.

Children may drop hints as a way of telling that adults may not understand. These statements/hints may sound like the following:

- "He/She hurts me"
- "I am afraid to go to _____'s house"
- "_____ does things to me that I don't like"
- "I don't like to spend time with _____"

Why do some children tell and others don't?

Sexual abuse can be an overwhelming, scary time for children. Children are taught at a very young age to listen to adults and not to talk back to them, to behave the way adults want them to, and to do what adults tell them to do. Children sometimes blame themselves for the abuse as well. **It is very difficult for children to talk about sexual abuse.** Delays in reporting and or denial are the rule, not the exception.

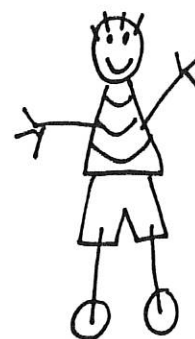


Other reasons children might not tell:

- They may have been threatened.
- They may feel guilty or blame themselves.
- They may be confused and not know how to tell.
- They may be afraid no one will believe them.
- They may be afraid that they will be blamed, punished, or get in trouble.
- They may fear further harm to themselves, friends, pets, or other family members.
- They may feel if they are "good enough", it will stop.
- They may be embarrassed.
- They may not know that it is inappropriate behavior.
- They may think that they have already told and that an adult "didn't get it."
- They may feel loyalty to the abuser.

Most children don't tell even if they have been asked.

- Evidence that a child has been sexually abused is not always obvious, And many children do not report that they have been abused.
- Over 30% of victims never disclose the experience to ANYONE.
- Young victims may not recognize their victimization as sexual abuse.
- Almost 80% initially deny abuse or are tentative about disclosing. Of those who do disclose, approximately 75% disclose accidentally.
- Fabricated sexual abuse reports constitute only 1% to 4% of all reported cases. Of these reports, 75% are falsely reported by adults and 25% are reported by children. Children only fabricate $\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the time.





Children may tell about sexual abuse when:

- They feel physically safe from the abuser {maybe the abuser has moved out, is in jail, etc.}
- The frequency or the abusive behaviors are happening more often and they are scared.
- They are afraid that the abuse will happen to a younger sibling.
- They meet an adult they trust and may feel safe enough to tell.

What do I do after my child has disclosed sexual abuse?

Encourage your child to talk freely. Don't put words into their mouth and don't deny the abuse. Do not make judgmental comments and never blame, punish, or embarrass your child. Stay calm because any feelings that you may have, whether it's anger, guilt, denial, or confusion, may discourage your child to continue talking. A strong reaction from you may increase their own feelings of shame, guilt, or embarrassment.

Believe your child. Although you may not want to believe that your child has been a victim, children seldom make up stories about sexual abuse. Let your child know that telling about the abuse was the right thing to do, and reinforce that they are not in any trouble for what happened and that it is not their fault.

Don't ask your child a lot of questions about what has happened. Forensic interviewers, law enforcement, the prosecutor's office, and children's protective service workers are professionally trained to ask such questions. Do not confront the person suspected of the abuse, allow law enforcement to investigate.

Report the abuse immediately to Michigan's Centralized Intake at {855-444-3911}

What happens after the abuse has been reported?

If your child has been abused by someone not living in your home, Children's Protective Services will most likely refer you to your local law enforcement agency. If your child has been abused by a parent or other caregiver in the home, or their parent who does not currently live in the home, then the case will most likely be assigned to both law enforcement and a Children's Protective Services Worker. After a report has been made, law enforcement will most likely contact the Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center and schedule a forensic interview.

Why use a Child Advocacy Center {CAC}?

A CAC uses a comprehensive approach that ensures children receive child-focused services in a child friendly environment- one in which the needs of children and families come first.

Communities that have a CAC experience many benefits:

- More immediate follow-up to child abuse reports
- More efficient medical and mental health referrals.
- Reduction in the number of child interviews.
- Increased successful prosecutions.
- Consistent support for child victims and their families.

Professionals involved in multidisciplinary work report:

- Greater appreciation and understanding of other disciplines.
- Better access to cross-disciplinary training.
- More informed decision making.



What is a forensic interview?

The forensic interview is conducted by an interviewer specifically trained in the Michigan Forensic Interviewing Protocol. The goal of the interview is to gather information from the child about complaints of abuse that have been made. The interview is conducted by one interviewer in a child friendly atmosphere that is safe and supportive. The interview is observed by Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center staff, law enforcement, Children's Protective Services, an assistant prosecuting attorney, and others who may be authorized to observe the interview. Information from this interview may be used by Law Enforcement, the Prosecutor's Office, or Children's Protective Services to decide whether or not to investigate the complaint any further.

Children often will not tell about sexual abuse or give important details if parents and/or caregivers are present. Parents and caregivers sometimes have trouble controlling their emotions while listening to details of their child's abuse. Your non-verbal reactions to what you are hearing can also cause your child to shut down. Your child may fear that it will only upset you further and leave parts of the story out to protect you. Knowing that parents would be watching may inhibit their child from speaking due to wanting to protect the parent from hearing what occurred. For these reasons, parents and caregivers are not allowed to observe or be in the room during the interview. Parents and caregivers will have an opportunity to meet with the Multidisciplinary Team after the forensic interview. They are free to talk with all the team members and ask questions they wish during this meeting. If needed, referral sources for counseling or other needs will be provided to families by the Sanilac County Child Advocacy Center staff.



What do I do or say after the interview?

- The most important factor in helping a child after the interview is the strong support of his or her family and/or caregiver.
- Be calm and supportive. It may be difficult to listen to what your child has to say, but your child needs to talk to someone who will believe and support them.
- Return to a normal routine as soon as possible.
- Do not share with the child your feelings of frustration or helplessness. Instead, talk to someone you trust and/or find help for yourself. You do not need to handle this alone.
- Be careful not to interrogate, quiz or question your child about the interview or abuse.
- It is very important that your child be allowed to express his or her feelings. Spending special time with your child may help them to share their feelings and thoughts with you. Especially for young children, follow their lead.
- Let your child know that talking with the interviewer was the right thing to do and acknowledge the courage it took to do so.

What are the steps in the court process?

After the interview, the law enforcement officer will determine if the case should be referred to the prosecuting attorney's office. The prosecutor will then decide if the case should go through the criminal court system. It is important to know that every case is different and may not follow the same steps as another, and may or may not result in a trial. You may contact the investigating law enforcement officer for information regarding your case. If the case is going forward, the Victim's Right Advocate through the courts can help to support your family through the court process.



How do I prepare my child for court?

Our current legal system was not set up with children in mind; however, this is slowly changing through the efforts of Children's Advocacy Centers and professional team members all over the country. Working with the legal system can be a confusing and frustrating process. The investigation must be handled carefully and completed by taking certain steps. As a result, it may seem as if the investigation is moving very slowly. In addition, court dates may be rescheduled many times and legal cases may take as long as one or two years to get settled. It is okay for you to check on the status of your case with the investigating law enforcement officer and with the Victim Rights Advocate.

There are many things that can be done to help prepare a child for court. The Victims Rights Advocate can arrange a visit with the prosecuting attorney's office, a visit to the courtroom and answer questions about testifying. These actions will help make going to court easier for you and your child.

Should I take my child to counseling?

Many people like to think that they can manage their own worries or troubles. When a child has been sexually abused, however, the stress of the entire experience is overwhelming. All of this can be talked about with a counselor who is experienced in treating children who have been sexually abused. We can provide you with a list of local counseling agencies should you need one.



Resources



Websites for Parents and Caregivers:

Darkness to Light: www.darkness2light.org

A Personal Safety website: www.childluresprevention.com

Michigan Public Sexual Offender Registry: www.mipsor.state.mi.us

Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: www.missingkids.com

Books for Parents or Caregivers:

Getting Together: Helping You to Help Yourself

By Elizabeth D. Drake, M.Ed. and Anne E. Gilroy - Child Care Publications {1990}

Trauma Through a Child's Eyes

By Peter A. Levine and Maggie Kline

Working Together: A Team Effort

By Elizabeth D. Drake, M.Ed., Anne E. Gilroy, and Thomas H. Roane, M.A. - Child Care Publications {1990}

Helping Children with Sexual Behavior Problems: A Guidebook for Parents and Substitute Caregivers

By Toni Cavanagh Johnson, Ph.D. {1998}

Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors: What's Natural and Healthy
By Toni Cavanagh Johnson, Ph.D.

When Your Child Has Been Molested: A Parent's Guide to Healing and Recovery
By Kathryn Brohl and Joyce Case Potter {2004}

Books for Teenagers:

Getting Together: Helping You to Help Yourself {For Teenage Females}
By Elizabeth D. Drake, M.Ed. and Anne E. Gilroy - Child Care Publications {1990}.

A Sexual Abuse Workbook for Teenage Girls
By Lulie Munson and Karen Riskin

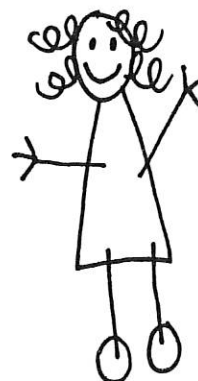
Working Together: A Team Effort {For Teenage Males}
By Elizabeth D. Drake, M.Ed., Anne E. Gilroy, and Thomas H. Roane, M.A. - Child Care Publications {1990}

It Happened To Me: A Teen's Guide to Overcoming Sexual Abuse
By William Lee Carter {2002}

Dear Elizabeth: A Diary
By Gene Mackey and Helen Swan - KIDSRIGHTS Publication {1993}.

How Long Does It Hurt? A guide to recovering from incest and sexual abuse for teenagers, their friends, and their families
By Cynthia L. Mather, with Kristina E. Debye - Jossey-Bass Publishers {1994}.

Shining Through - A guide for girls 10 and Up
Mindy B. Loiselle and Leslie Bailey Wright {1992}





Books for Children:

Brave Bart

Caroline H. Sheppard

A Terrible Thing Happened

By Margaret M. Holmes

Someone In My Family Has Molested Children: A Book for Kids Whose Dad, Mom, or Relative Has Molested Children.

By Eliana Gil and Jeffrey Bodmer-Turner-Launch Press {1994}.

Please Tell

By Jessie Ottenweller

No More Hurt

By Wendy Deaton

It Happens to BOYS Too...

By Jane A.W. Satullo, M.A., Roberta Russell, Ph.D., and Pat A. Bradway – Rape Crisis Center of the Berkshires Press {1992}

Do You Have A Secret?

By Jennifer Moore-Mallinos

When I Grow Up, I Want To Be Like Me

By Sandra Magsamen

A Touching Book... For Little People and For Big People...

By Jan Hindman – AlexAndria Associates {1992}.

Trouble with Secrets

By Karen Johnsen

When I was Little Like You

By Jane Porett