

# PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA)

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A toolkit for parents,  
caregivers, and  
community members



Child sexual abuse can be a difficult topic to talk - or even think - about. No parent or caregiver wants to consider the idea that their child, or a child they know, was sexually abused. But in Alaska, child sexual abuse is all too common. In 2018, 8% of Alaskan children who were confirmed victims of child abuse were sexually abused. These children often suffer in silence. Despite how difficult it is to talk about child sexual abuse, it is a crucial component of our work to prevent abuse and promote healing.



Alaska Children's Trust wants to provide you with tools to help prevent, identify, and report instances of child sexual abuse to ensure a safe and thriving environment for Alaska's children and youth. The information in this packet speaks frankly about difficult topics. It may make you feel uncomfortable or leave you with additional questions.

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**IF AT ANY POINT YOU NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL STAR'S 24/7 TOLL-FREE, STATEWIDE CRISIS LINE AT 1-800-478-8999.**

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**IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED, CALL THE ALASKA CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE AT 1-800-478-4444.**

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**CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS, WHICH SPECIALIZE IN THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, ARE ALSO A PHONE CALL AWAY. CONTACT THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE AT 907-688-0163.**

# WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?



Child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to ANY sexual activity between an adult and a child under the age of 18, even if it doesn't involve penetration, force, pain, or touching. Sexual activity between children can also be sexual abuse if there is a significant age gap, developmental differences, or size difference between the children.

[Learn more here.](#)

## KNOW THE FACTS

91% of CSA is perpetrated by someone the child or the child's family knows.

91%

CSA happens to children of all ages. The median age for reported abuse is 9 years old.

9

years old

In Alaska, 13.7% of adults reported having been sexually abused as a child.

13.7%

Nationwide, one in four girls and one in 13 boys will be sexually abused at some point during their childhood.



But only 38% of child victims disclose the fact that they have been sexually abused. That means that 62% of survivors will never disclose their abuse.

Because most abusers are known or trusted by families, CSA often involves grooming.

Grooming is a process where an abuser slowly builds a trusting relationship with a child and/or the child's family. By grooming both the child and their family, the abuser attempts to gain access to the child and earn the entire family's trust.



## GROOMING BEHAVIORS MAY INCLUDE...

Special attention,  
outings, and gifts

Isolating the  
child from  
others

Filling needs  
and roles within  
the family

Filling the child's  
unmet needs

Treating the  
child as if he  
or she is older  
than others

Using secrecy,  
blame, or  
threats to  
maintain  
control

## BE ON THE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF GROOMING

For examples of red flag behaviors and ways to intervene to support vulnerable children, [click here](#).

# ONLINE GROOMING AND CSA



In the digital age, it's increasingly important to be aware of children and youth's online activities.



Some perpetrators may use online communications to groom children for in-person abuse. These abusers may communicate secretly with children using online platforms.



Abuse can also take place completely online. This type of abuse often involves a perpetrator acquiring sexual pictures or videos of children or youths, usually by engaging with their online profiles and establishing a rapport. Perpetrators may pretend to be younger than they actually are and/or a member of the opposite sex to solicit sexually explicit content.



Online abuse sometimes takes the form of "sextortion," a form of blackmail perpetrators use to acquire additional sexual content from the child, coerce them into engaging in sexual activity, or to obtain money from the child. For more about sextortion and how to prevent it, [click here](#).

Learn more about online crimes against children and the unique characteristics of cybercrimes [here](#).

# YOUTH WITH SEXUAL BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS



While individuals who sexually abuse children are often thought to be adults and are often referred to as “pedophiles” or “predators” in the media, a substantial portion of CSA is committed by other minors (children under age 18) who do not fit the stereotypical image of a sex offender. It can be especially difficult to talk about CSA perpetrated by juveniles. However, given that as many as 40% of CSA victims were abused by another minor, it is important to understand this form of abuse.

## KNOW THE FACTS



Research shows that the number of youth identified by police as having committed a sex offense increases at age 12 and plateaus after age 14. Youth in this age-range experience many changes with the onset of puberty, and some may exhibit problematic sexual behaviors at this time.



The good news is that youth who exhibit problematic sexual behaviors show a significant decrease in these behaviors following short-term outpatient treatment and have very low rates of additional problematic sexual behaviors. Most youth with these behaviors will not go on to become adult offenders.



It's important to know that most youths with problematic sexual behaviors have no known history of abuse, and most CSA survivors do not go on to become abusers.

**If you are a parent or caregiver concerned about your child's sexual behavior, [see this guide](#) for information on choosing a treatment program or [find your local](#) Child Advocacy Center for help, support, and information. There is help available, and children with problematic sexual behaviors can get treatment and go on to live safe, healthy lives.**

# PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

## Talking to Children

Talking with children early, often, and openly is one of the best things parents and caregivers can do to prevent child sexual abuse. Experts recommend that talks about personal safety include helping children identify several trusted adults they can turn to and teaching children of all ages anatomically correct names for private parts. Just because these body parts are “private” doesn’t mean we should never mention them. In fact, encouraging the use of accurate language can help protect children against CSA and help them report if they are abused.

There are many resources that can help you start the conversation about personal safety in a way that feels comfortable for you and your child!

**Click the resources below to learn more**

### **GUIDE**

Great for talking to different age groups

### **VIDEO**

Kid-friendly personal body safety video

### **COLORING BOOK**

Print out this personal safety coloring book

### **WORKSHEET**

Help kids identify trusted adults

### **VARIETY OF RESOURCES**

Prevention and education

### **ONLINE PLATFORM**

Work together to set ground rules for internet use

# FAMILIES - PREVENTING CSA



While it's important to empower children to protect themselves, adults play the most important role in preventing child sexual abuse. Beyond being open and honest with your child, there are steps parents and caregivers can take to decrease their child's risk of being sexually abused. Learn more about what you can do below, and click on the links for additional resources.

1

Assess your child's activities. Between sports, tutoring, music, etc., your child likely comes into contact with a lot of adults. Before you entrust your child to an organization, ask questions about their prevention policies. You can find Darkness to Light's full list of questions to ask [here](#).

2

Learn more about CSA. You can sign up for "10 Conversations to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse," a series of biweekly email lessons about CSA, [here](#).

3

Help ensure your child's online privacy. It can be difficult to assess the safety of every website and app your child uses. This page contains great guidebooks that demystify popular apps, services and platforms, including information on best practices for privacy settings.

4

Learn more about Alaska's laws and policies regarding CSA [here](#).

5

Learn more about recommendations to improve CSA prevention legislation and see how Alaska's laws stack up [here](#).



# EDUCATORS - PREVENTING CSA

Educators and youth service providers play a key role in protecting children and youth from CSA. For children abused at home, educators are often the last line of defense. Student education is also crucial – research shows that children are less likely to be victimized when caring adults, including educators, teach them about sexual abuse. Learn what you can do below, and click the links for great resources.



Learn about CSA prevention in Alaska's schools. You can review the requirements mandated by the Alaska Safe Children's Act (informally known as Erin's and Bree's Laws) and find links to trainings and implementation support here and here.

1

View a list of recommended curricula to fulfill the requirements mandated under the Act here. View the larger toolkit from Alaska DEED with information on the Act and its requirements, including detailed descriptions of curricula, here.

2

Bring a new training to your school/organization. The Enough Abuse campaign offers evidence-based trainings for schools and organizations to help equip your workplace with the knowledge, tools, and skills to prevent child sexual abuse.

3

Join the Gatekeepers for Kids Learning Community, a free resource that provides youth-serving organizations and schools with access to reports, research, and tools to prevent CSA, as well as information on trainings.

4

Teach your students about digital safety. This student project kit, compiled by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, helps teach children ages 5-17 about online safety and digital citizenship through fun, informative projects.

5

# GET HELP

## Identifying and Reporting Abuse

Children may disclose abuse in different ways. While some children may disclose directly, others may share indirectly. Understanding the different ways children may talk about CSA will help you respond appropriately and ensure that every child is heard, believed, and helped.

### TYPES OF DISCLOSURE

#### Direct Disclosure

A child speaks directly and specifically about abuse.

#### Indirect Disclosure

A child uses vague or unclear language to reference abuse.

#### Disclosure with Strings Attached

A child references a “secret” but wants assurances before they disclose.

For more on these types of disclosures, and for information on responding to CSA in Alaska, check out [STAR’s guide](#) for teachers, caregivers, and adults working with children.

#### Disguised Disclosure

A child talks about abuse that happened to someone else, or references abuse abstractly, to disclose abuse happening to them.

It’s also important to remember that many children may only disclose abuse if prompted by an adult and will not self-initiate. Prompts need not be about CSA and can instead take the form of questions about a child or youth’s physical and mental well-being. Children and youth may also disclose to their same-age peers. If a child tells you that a friend has been abused, take it seriously. If you’d like to learn more about CSA disclosure and read the latest research, [see this document](#) prepared by Darkness to Light.

# RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE



If a child does disclose abuse, whether directly or indirectly, these guidelines will help you respond appropriately.



- Believe the child. One of the main reasons children do not report abuse is fear of not being believed.
- Reassure the child that disclosing was the right thing to do and that they did nothing wrong.
- Evaluate the situation. Determine whether the child is in immediate danger and, if so, contact the police. Do your best not to overreact - it may frighten the child or lead them to believe they did something wrong in disclosing.
- Collect enough information to make a report, but don't push for details or ask leading questions. Let the child guide the conversation. It is important that you do not investigate or ask the child in-depth questions - leave that to the professionals.
- Report the abuse. You have an obligation to intervene and alert the proper agencies to ensure the child's safety. Do not promise to keep the abuse secret. Adults - even those who are not mandatory reporters - need to intervene to protect children.

# REPORTING ABUSE



All adults should report suspected child abuse and neglect to both the law enforcement agency assigned to the area the abuse took place and the Office of Children's Services.

**Begin by calling the  
Child Abuse Hotline:  
1-800-478-4444**

**Then call local law  
enforcement.**

Find a list of Alaska police contacts for child sexual abuse [here](#).

For more information about reporting abuse in Alaska, including an overview of mandatory reporting policies, click [here](#). For a review of mandatory reporting requirements, click [here](#).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

STAR (Standing Together Against Rape) offers a 24/7 free and confidential crisis line. Call (907) 276-7273 or (800) 478-8999.

Careline Alaska offers a 24/7 free and confidential crisis line at 1-877-266-4357. Or text 4help to 839863 from 3-11 pm Tues. – Sat.

Find a Child Advocacy Center in Alaska [here](#). Child Advocacy Centers are places where children and safe caregivers can visit following a concern of abuse, witnessing violence, or sexual exploitation.

Find services for domestic violence and sexual assault in your community [here](#).

Darkness to Light offers a 24/7 confidential crisis line. Call 866-FOR-LIGHT or text LIGHT to 741741.

The National Sexual Assault Hotline is available 24/7 at 800-656-4673

**11** Sources for facts and statistics used in this report can be found at: [www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/CSA-prevention](http://www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/CSA-prevention)