

PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA)

A toolkit for parents,
caregivers, and
community members



view online:



Resources and references available:
[www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/
csa-prevention-toolkit](http://www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit)



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.

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

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

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.

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, go to our resource list: www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit

ONLINE GROOMING AND CSA

In the digital age, it's increasingly important to be aware of children and teens' 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, go to our resource page.

Learn more about online crimes against children and the unique characteristics of cybercrimes at:
www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit

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, find a guide for choosing a treatment program or find your local Child Advocacy Center in our resource list, here: www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit.

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!

Find links to all of these resources in our resource list online!
www.alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit

GUIDE

Great for talking to different age groups

VIDEO

Kid-friendly personal body safety video

COLORING BOOK

Print out a 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.

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 list of questions to ask in our resource list.

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 in a link in our resource list.

3

Help ensure your child's online privacy. It can be difficult to assess the safety of every website and app your child uses. There are awesome guidebooks that can help you demystify popular apps, services and platforms, including info. on best practices for privacy settings.

4

Learn more about Alaska's laws and policies regarding CSA. Find them in our online resource list: alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit

5

Learn more about recommendations to improve CSA prevention legislation and see how Alaska's laws stack up!

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.

Find access to all these resources and more at: alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit



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 at the above link.

1

View a list of recommended curricula to fulfill the requirements mandated under the Act. View the larger toolkit from Alaska DEED with information on the Act and its requirements, including detailed descriptions of curricula: alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit

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. The 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.

Disguised Disclosure

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

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, available in our resource list.

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, go to:

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 in and the Office of Children's Services.



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

**Then call local law
enforcement.**

You can also find a list of Alaska police contacts for child sexual abuse in our resource list.

For more information about reporting abuse in Alaska, including an overview of mandatory reporting policies and requirements, go to our resource list.

**[alaskachildrenstrust.org/
csa-prevention-toolkit](https://alaskachildrenstrust.org/csa-prevention-toolkit)**

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 on our main resource list page. Child Advocacy Centers are places where children and safe caregivers can visit following a concern of abuse, witnessing violence, or sexual exploitation.

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