



## SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF PRIMARY GRADE CHILDREN

Today your child was provided an important safety program presented by a teacher, administrator, or counselor who works at your child's school or PSR program. This program taught your child that the parts of his or her body covered by a swimsuit are private. Your child was taught three steps to take if anyone tries to touch the private areas of his or her body or tries to get your child to touch the other person's private body areas. These steps are:

- 1) Say NO or STOP using a big voice**
- 2) Get away from the unsafe person**
- 3) Tell a safe adult, such as a parent or teacher that they trust.**

It was explained that sometimes, parents and medical professionals may touch the private areas of a child's body if there are health concerns. This information sheet is provided in order to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child. Please review the information. Your child was also provided a handout of safety rules that you may review with your child.

*Three steps can help keep your child safe.*

### STEP 1: KNOW THE FACTS

- In America, before reaching adulthood, one in four females and one in eight males experiences child sexual abuse.
- Young children can be the victims of child sexual abuse. About 40% of the time the perpetrators of young children are themselves minors; 60% of the time these perpetrators are adults.
- Studies show that about 10% of child sexual abuse is committed by strangers, 30% by family members, and about 60% by others known to the child or family.
- Child molesters often spend time "grooming" their victims. This means that they get the child accustomed to non-sexual touches; develop a special, friendly relationship with the child; and get to know and earn the trust of the child's family. Grooming is aimed toward lessening the chances that a child will tell that he or she has been abused and, if they tell, that they will be believed. Grooming is often done online.
- Common behavior in young children includes asking questions about gender differences, body parts, pregnancy, and birth. It is also normal for young children to look at, show, and touch their private body parts. It is NOT common for young children to have knowledge of specific sexual acts or language, or to simulate sexual acts with peers, dolls, or toys.

### Warning Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse of a Young Child

- Draws artwork of sexual body parts and/or sexual acts
- Demonstrates age-inappropriate sexualized play with toys, dolls, self or others.
- Has odd or excessive itching or pain in their genital or anal body areas, with or without obvious injury
- Has frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Demonstrates inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior
- Shows unusual fear of or has a sudden reluctance to be alone with a certain person
- Asks other children to behave sexually or play sexual games
- A sexually abused child may or may not show physical signs of injury from abuse.

## STEP 2: EDUCATE YOUR CHILD

For many people, it is not easy to have a discussion about personal body safety with their children. It can feel awkward to discuss these issues with children, particularly young children. But doing so is very important. It could save your child from sexual mistreatment and the physical and emotional damage that comes from it.

- Choose times to speak to your child that are relaxed and unhurried. Show with your tone of voice that this is an important topic, but not a scary one. Remember, this discussion should take place more than once!
- Teach your child that he or she has body parts that are private. Teach your child that these parts are different for boys and girls, and the appropriate names for these body parts. Explain that no one besides a parent or medical professional should look at or touch your child on those areas because they are private.
- Educate your child that other people have private parts to their bodies, too. No one should ask your child to look at or touch the private areas of the other person's body. Your child should provide other people privacy in bathrooms and changing areas, and not ask to see the private areas of others' bodies.
- Explain to your child that these rules apply to everyone, no matter if they are a boy or a girl; if they are a child, a teenager, or an adult; and no matter if they are a stranger or someone known to your child.
- Share with your preschooler that you want him or her to do three things if someone were to break these rules:
  - 1) **Say NO! Use a loud, big voice.**
  - 2) **Get away from that person.**
  - 3) **Tell you or another safe adult.**
- Teach your child the difference between a *secret* and a *surprise*. A secret is something you are never to tell; a surprise will be shared with everyone at a certain time (for example, at a party or on a holiday). Teach your child that can always tell you anything, even if someone else told them not to tell.
- Make certain that your child knows his or her full name, address, and main phone number.

## STEP 3: TAKE ACTION

**SCREEN** babysitters and caregivers. Be very careful who has access to your children. Check their references. Once you have chosen a caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how their experience with the caregiver was, and carefully listen to their responses.

**RESPECT** your child's fear of or discomfort around a certain person, even if this is a person you normally trust.

**REPORT** any suspicions immediately. If you notice an adult with suspicious behaviors, report your concerns to someone in charge of the preschool or program involved. If you believe your child has been abused, contact your child's pediatrician or child protective services at **1-800-392-3738**.

*Most importantly, **BELIEVE YOUR CHILD** if they report inappropriate behavior to you, even if they report someone you know and normally trust. Children must overcome a great deal of hurt and fear to report sexual abuse. If your child ever reports to you that someone has touched him or her inappropriately, *listen to them, believe them, show your love and support for them*, and report your concerns to the appropriate authorities.*