

One Little Step at a Time...

A Parent's/Caregivers Guide



THORNTON/NORTHGLENN VICTIM SERVICES

720-977-5172

Thornton Police Department - 9551 Civic Center Dr., Thornton
720-977-5150

Northglenn Police Department - 50 W. Community Center Dr., Northglenn
303-450-8892

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This guide is intended to provide general information about Child Sexual Assault, Child Abuse and Internet Safety.

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THERAPY AND COUNSELING/RESOURCES/IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Therapy is an essential part of the healing process. Therapy provides many benefits for children which can include the following:

- Learning strategies to manage the consequences of being exposed to trauma
- Reassure children that there is nothing wrong with them and that the abuse is not the child's fault
- Receive help with Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) dissociation, avoidance
- Regain control of sexual behavior and cognitive development process
- Learn appropriate boundaries
- Reinstatement trust in the world and belief system

RESOURCES

Ralston House - www.ralstonhouse.net

Darkness to Light - 866-for-light - www.Darkness2Light.org

Internet Safety Foundation - www.internetsafetyfoundation.com

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

National Children's Advocacy Center - www.nationalcac.org

Safe Horizon - 1-800-621-HOP - www.safehorizon.org

Stop It Now! - 1-888-Prevent - www.Stopitnow.org

Wings Foundation - 303-238-8660 - www.wingsfound.org

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

17th Judicial Crime Victim Compensation - 303-835-5615

17th Judicial District Victim/Witness Office - 303-659-7720

17th Judicial District Attorney's Office - 303-659-7720

Adams County Div. of Children & Family Services Intake - 303-412-5212

Broomfield County Div. of Children & Family Services Intake - 720-887-2271



DEPRESSION

This stage of grief occurs in some people after they realize the true extent of the trauma. Signs of depression may include sleep and appetite disturbances, a lack of energy and concentration, and crying spells. A person may feel loneliness, emptiness, isolation, and self-pity.

ACCEPTANCE

In time, an individual may be able to come to terms with various feelings and accept the fact that the loss has occurred. Healing can begin once the loss becomes integrated into the individuals set of life experiences.

INTERNET SAFETY

We live in an era where internet is essential, which is why it is also important that kids are monitored and taught about using the internet safely. Below are some tips on internet safety:

- Being able to communicate and have a regular conversation with children about internet is important.
- Being able to have an open and honest conversation with children about your opinion on social media, pornography etc. while asking them about their thoughts and opinions as well.
- Try to stay up to date with changes in the internet. This can include learning ways on how to monitor use of the internet and being able to set parental controls.
- Create a safety plan with children. Try to have a conversation with children on what they should do if someone or something makes them uncomfortable. Reiterate to them that you are a safe person to go to if they needed to.
- If encountered with something concerning, decide if it needs to be reported to law enforcement.

As the expansion of the internet increases, more and more children are becoming equally or even more advanced as some adults. Children are prone to the same type of risks as any internet user but the face other risks such as inappropriate contact from people who may wish to abuse or exploit them. They could also be exposed to inappropriate content, being able to access sexually explicit, racist, violent or other harmful material. It is important as a parent or a caregiver that you take simple precautions to reduce these risks. Supervising children's online activity and blocking certain sites or keeping security levels high. This might seem like an impossible task because of multiple sources such as cell phones, computers, tablets and game consoles, but if you understand the risks and plan accordingly before giving children internet access can help against these risks.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

The federal Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) defines child abuse and neglect as, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm".

Child Abuse Signs

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has learning problems or difficulty concentrating
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Child has unexplained injuries, such as burns, bruises, broken bones, etc.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the failure of a parent or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Which can include the following:

- Physical needs; failure to provide necessary food as well as shelter and or supervision.
- Medical needs; failure to provide or withhold necessary medication or mental health treatment.
- Educational needs; failure to educate child or withhold them from public education.
- Emotional needs; Failure to provide psychological care.





Although estimates vary, the statistics are shocking. One in four girls and one in ten boys will be sexually abused by the age of eighteen.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual abuse is a violation of power. Many times, there is no apparent use of force because the offender relies on the child's ignorance.

This crime is a sexual act imposed on a child who lacks the emotional, physical, or mature reasoning ability of an adult. The perpetrator uses their powerful

and authoritative position to force the child into these acts without concern for the child's age or subordinate position.

The sexual activity can range from disrobing the child to penetration of any bodily opening with a body part or foreign object. Some children hold on to the idea they were not forced to engage in intercourse. However, the effects of any act can have the same devastating outcome. Asking a child to have sex is a crime. This crime can range from a single act of exposure or fondling to years of repeated sexual assault.

RELATIONSHIP OF PARTICIPANTS

In approximately 75% of the child sexual abuse cases the perpetrator is known and trusted by the child. The perpetrator uses his or her position of authority to entice and engage the child, often without violence. The child is exploited, and the perpetrator misuses their power to subtly coerce the child into engaging in these sexual acts.

Remember, children do not seduce adults. Child sex assault does not happen because of a physical illness. Child perpetrator are of all nationalities, races, religions, heterosexual as well as homosexual, from all socioeconomic classes and age groups, and both sexes. The perpetrator use of drugs or alcohol does not justify the offense.

Any child can be victimized. Children rarely lie about sex assault. Usually they have more to lose than to gain. One example of this may be when a child was someplace where he or she was warned not to be. He or she may be more fearful of being punished for breaking the rule than for revealing the abuse. Children fear they may have enticed the abuser, or they will not be believed. Children who are sexually abused by a same-sexed abuser find it even more difficult to reveal the abuse. They fear others may think they are homosexual, or they should have fought off the abuser.



The stages of grief reflect a variety of reactions that may surface as an individual try to make sense of how this trauma affects him or her. An important part of the healing process is allowing oneself to go through and accept all feelings that you may experience. There are traditionally five stages of grief; however, everyone experiences grief in a manner that is unique to him or her, the situation and the relationship that was lost. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and you may not experience the stages in order, you may not experience all of the stages, and you may experience some stages multiple times. These stages are evident in every type of loss.

DENIAL, NUMBNESS AND SHOCK

This stage serves to protect the individual from experiencing the intensity of the loss. It may be useful when the grieving person must take action. Numbness is a normal reaction to an immediate loss and should not be confused with "lack of caring". As an individual slowly acknowledges the impact of the loss; denial and disbelief will diminish.

ANGER

This reaction usually occurs when an individual feels helpless and powerless, hurt and betrayal. An individual may be angry at a higher power, a medical provider, or toward life in general. However, anger may also mask other feelings that an individual may not be ready to express.

BARGAINING

This stage may involve persistent thoughts about what could have been done to prevent the trauma. People can become preoccupied about the way things could have been better, or different. If this stage is not properly resolved, intense feelings of remorse or guilt may interfere with the healing process.

Trial

Evidence and testimony are presented to the judge and jury from the district attorney and the defense lawyer. Testimony is usually required from the victim and witnesses.

Sentencing Hearing

If the defendant is found guilty, this hearing is held to determine the appropriate sentence. There is usually a pre-sentence investigation as well as the victim's impact statement to assist the judge in making this decision. The victim and witnesses may attend this hearing and may be asked to provide additional information. The victim has the right to speak during sentencing.

A victim advocate with the District Attorney's office will provide support through these hearings and ensure that everyone is prepared. They will make sure that everyone feels comfortable with the process. The advocate will walk everyone through the courtroom and explain everyone who might be in the courtroom.



WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT ?

Child Sexual Assault is a sexual act on a child that does not have the emotional, physical or mature reasoning ability of an adult. These acts can be physical as well as an act that is not physical. Child Sexual Assault/ Abuse can include:

- Exhibitionism, or exposing oneself to a minor
- Fondling
- Intercourse
- Masturbation in the presence of a minor or forcing the minor to masturbate
- Obscene phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction
- Producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children
- Sex of any kind with a minor, including vaginal, oral or anal
- Sex trafficking
- Any other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child's mental, emotional or physical welfare

WHO TYPICALLY OFFENDS

There is no one type that can describe a typical abuser. They look and act in different ways, hold a variety of different jobs and are known in the community. The majority of perpetrators are known to the family and to the child. Not all perpetrators have to or are adults to harm a child. This can include but is not limited to older family members, teachers, coach, caretaker, etc. Very often a perpetrator will use position of power over the victim to coerce, manipulate and or intimidate the child. Child sexual assault not only includes physical violations but of trust and authority as well.

WHY CHILDREN MAY NOT DISCLOSE

Research shows that most victims of childhood sexual abuse will never disclose during childhood. There are many reasons a child may be hesitant to tell or decided never to do so. Some include:

- Being ashamed, embarrassed, or feeling responsible for the abuse
- The child may have been threatened by the abuser with violence against themselves, family or friends.
- Afraid of not being believed or fear they will be judged.
- Be afraid of what might happen if they tell.
- The child could not realize they have been abused, especially if they are young or have disability.

HOW OFTEN DOES IT OCCUR?

Child sexual abuse happens to children of all ages- from infants to adolescents. In the U.S., experts estimate that one in five girls and one in ten boys are sexually abused before they turn eighteen.

WHAT A PARENT/CAREGIVER CAN EXPECT

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Children may react in a number of different ways following abuse. Every child is different, so changes in both behavioral and emotional change can vary. Some common behavioral reactions during and after abuse can include:

Physical Signs:

- Bleeding, Bruises, or swelling in genital area
- Bloody, torn, or stained underclothes
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections
- Pain, Itching, or burning in genital area

Behavioral Signs:

- Changes in hygiene
- Exhibits signs of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Has trouble in school, such as absences or drop in grades
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviors
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Overly protective and concerned for siblings, or assumes a caretaker role
- Shrinks away or seems threatened by physical contact

While these are some typical changes in behavior, not all children will react in one of these ways. It is important not to react strongly to them but to be comforting and supporting. Encourage them to turn these behaviors and emotional responses to words. How long these reactions last depend partly on how you and others react.

HOW TO RESPOND

While it is typical to feel shock, outrage and disbelief, it is important to remain calm. A child seeing your anger or pain may increase the guilt he or she feels. The child could also feel that he or she has harmed you and may become hesitant to confide in you. Some suggestions on how to respond are as follows:

- Go talk in a private, safe space
- Assure that you believe what he or she is telling you.
- Thank your child for having the courage to come tell you about what has happened.
- Assure that no matter what your child said, did, or felt, that it is not his or her fault and that they did not cause this.

Advisement Hearing

This is the first time the defendant is brought before a judge and the courts after the arrest and where they will let the defendant know what charges they are being investigated for. During this stage of the court process, the defendant does not have to plead guilty or not guilty. At this stage, the judge may also ask the defendant if they have an attorney, plan on obtaining an attorney or will need one appointed to them by the state. Lastly, the judge will also set a bond. Bond is a type of security provided to the courts assuring that the defendant will appear for future court dates. There are two types of bonds - cash/surety and personal recognizance. A cash bond requires the full payment in advanced, a surety bond usually involves a bondsman. A personal recognizance bond is a bond where the perpetrator signs a promise to appear in court. If they break this promise they will have to pay the amount designated. Bond/Bail is usually dependent but not limited on the following: The seriousness of the charges, defendant's criminal history, past and current residences, etc. The majority of the time it is not necessary for the victim of their family to attend the Advisement hearing.



Preliminary Hearing

During this hearing the judge determines if there is enough evidence to prove that a crime occurred, and the accused is the likely offender. Sometimes this hearing requires testimony by the victim and witnesses as well as police and medical.

Arrestment

This hearing is where the formal charges are read to the defendant. He or she is advised of his or her rights and a possible sentence may be imposed if he/she is convicted of the charges. This is where the defendant enters a plea of guilty or not guilty.

Motions Hearing

During this hearing the judge rules on various motions which have been made by the defense lawyer and the district attorney. This hearing may require testimony as well.

WHAT A PARENT/CAREGIVER CAN EXPECT - CONTINUED

What if my child doesn't disclose anything in the interview?

There is a possibility that this could occur. This is the first time your child is meeting the interviewer and he/she has a very small-time frame to get acquainted with your child. Because of this, your child might not say anything about what happened during the interview. Even if this happens, it is important to seek out long term therapy so your child can establish a relationship. This trusted relationship might help them open up more and more.

Who is permitted to come to the interview?

Speak with your detective to decide who should come to the interview with you and your child. You don't need to bring someone to watch your child when you are speaking with the interviewer, a victim advocate will supervise our child.

Crime Victim Compensation's Role

Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) may be able to help crime victims, or their families recover financially from the emotional and physical injuries caused during the incident. You could be compensated for crime related medical and counseling services. CVC can also assist with lost wages, repair/replacement of doors, locks and windows. You must apply for these services. You can obtain information about the services provided and an application by going to www.crimevictimcompensation.org.

The District Attorney/Prosecutor Role

The District Attorney/ Prosecutor makes the final decision to whether charges will be filed. Many factors can contribute to this decision which can affect the likelihood of success in court. Some of the factors taken into consideration are things like age and maturity of the child, ability to testify, presence of medical evidence, the presence of other witnesses, and whether the offender has confessed or not.

WHAT HAPPENS IN COURT?

The state is the one who determines if any criminal charges will be filed against the perpetrator. Police officers and detectives do the investigation and the District Attorney decides if there is enough evidence to take the perpetrator to court. Below is the order of the several different hearings in which you and your family may be involved in. It is important to note that not all of these hearings occur, if the perpetrator is offered a deal, many of these hearing can be avoided.

- Don't correct your child's language. He or she might not use the proper language but use their language.
- Tell your child that you will be taking action to keep him or her safe but be careful not to promise certain outcomes.
- Stay close to the child immediately after he or she has disclosed to you. This provides an extra sense of security. Reassure that they are safe with you.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Learning that your child has been sexually abused can feel overwhelming. It is completely natural to feel outraged and angry. What is important is how well you can cope and respond. A child's recovery depends on how you respond and react. Parents should remain calm and refrain from asking too many questions. Some responses to help our child feel supported are:

- Believe what your child has told you and let them know you are glad they shared this information with you
- Let the child know you are sorry that this happened
- Assure them that it is not their fault- they are not to blame themselves
- Let your child know that you will protect them and support them throughout this process
- Respect any feelings they might be experiencing
- Let them know that you're always available to talk about what happened

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

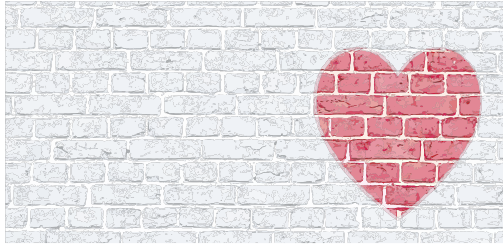
For many parents, seeking help for themselves can help cope with the feelings of shock, hopelessness, and anger. These are intense emotions that can be controlled through therapy and other techniques. It is essential that as a parent you remain strong for your child, so seeking help can ensure that this is possible. Here are some things you can do to help with your coping:

- Moderate your stress levels through activities with others
- Scheduling time for yourself, go for jogs, walks, yoga
- Talk to someone professional like a therapist
- Do not blame yourself, the only person who is at fault is the person who committed the crime.
- Talk with people you trust.
- Keep a journal. Write down personal record of events, appointments, interviews, and everyone involved in the case. Use it also to write down your thoughts and feelings.

WHAT A PARENT/CAREGIVER CAN EXPECT - CONTINUED

SELF-CARE AFTER TRAUMA

Self-care is taking steps to begin healing and feeling healthy and comfortable. Self-care can include developing coping mechanisms. Different self-care can include the following:



- Developing a sleeping routine
- Identifying food or meals that allow for your body to feel healthy and strong
- Trying different type of exercises or activities that made you feel more energized
- Developing routines, including activities that allow you to start the day and others that help wind down the day
- Writing down thoughts through journaling or poetry
- Meditating throughout the day
- Spending time at places you enjoy, like outdoors or with people you feel comfortable around

INVESTIGATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Victims Advocate (VA) Role
- Detective's Role
- Child Protective Services (C.P.S.) Role
- Sexual Assault Forensic Exam
- What is a Forensic Interview?
- Crime Victim Compensation (CVC) Role
- District Attorney (DA) Role

The Victim Advocates Role

The Law Enforcement Victim Advocate or Victim Witness Specialist is a trained professional who helps the caregiver when the abuse is reported. This person provides on scene crisis intervention as well as working with the caregiver to connect them to services in the community and provides support to the non-offending caregiver throughout the investigation.

The Detective's Role

The detective conducts interviews and is the lead investigator on a case. They gather evidence and uses a collaborative team approach to interview a child victim.

C.P.S (Child Protective Services) Role

The role of C.P.S is to assist in keeping children safe. They advocate on behalf of child/children. While using a collaborative team approach to develop a safety plan for the family. A C.P.S Case Worker can assist the child or children by referring to different resources, which can include but are not limited to, counseling, and therapy.

What is a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam?

Similar to obtaining DNA from a crime scene one can also obtain DNA from a person's body, this is called a sexual assault forensic exam (also known as a SANE exam).

What Happens During an Exam?

- Nurses will attend to the immediate medical needs.
- Several questions will be asked regarding medical history. Some of these questions can seem very up front and personal but know that these questions are designed to ensure that the evidence being collected from the exam can be connected to the perpetrator.
- A head to toe examination (applicable depending on the case). This may include a full body examination which can includes mouth, vagina, and or anus, samples of blood, urine, swabs of the body surface areas and hair samples.

What is a Forensic Interview?

A forensic interview is a chance to allow a child to talk to a trained professional about what the child has experienced. Forensic interviews are child- centered. The main goals of a forensic interview is to find out what occurred, reduce the level of trauma and help your child and family heal. The forensic interviews are conducted in a location that is set up to provide a safe, comfortable and supportive environment, to assist in achieving the forensic interviews goals. This interview can be the beginning stage of an investigation.

How should I prepare my child for the interview?

It is important that your child is prepared for the interview, but this also depends on your child's age and how much they understand. Ask the investigator what he/she would like you to tell your child about where you are going. Let them know that you are going to a safe place and that it is okay to say whatever they feel comfortable with to the people you are taking them to meet.

Will my child be traumatized by the interview?

All of the trained professionals, forensic interviewers will ensure that your child is not re- traumatized by the interview. The interviewer will take his/ her time to make sure your child feels comfortable without you. The interviewer will let your child know where you will be during the interview. Your child is allowed to leave the room and is also allowed breaks. It will be made clear that you are made available whenever necessary.