



Big Brothers Big Sisters.
SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN REGION

Empower Children

**WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO HELP
THEM BETTER PROTECT THEMSELVES**

**An educational program for
children and those who care for them.**

The Empower Children Program

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is serious about child safety in all matches. Children have a right to feel good about their bodies. They have a right to say “No” to anyone. Children are in charge of their bodies and can say who can and who cannot touch them. They need to understand how to keep themselves safe.

Child sexual abuse occurs when someone uses a child or tries to use a child in a sexual way for his or her own self-gratification. A sexual abuser can be an adult, a teenager or a child who is at least four years older than the child who is being victimized.

Child sexual abuse has some common elements. First, children should be reassured that most people will not harm them. However, knowing this information will EMPOWER them and will better help them to protect themselves and stay safe.

Definitions

- **Good Touch** is like a hug or a kiss from a parent/grandparent.
- **Bad Touch** is like a sexual touch from anyone which has occurred through manipulation, coaxing, being tricked, threatened, or forced.
- **Confusing Touch** is the most difficult because it is hard to explain. This kind of touch usually leaves children confused, not able to quite describe what occurred but with a strange feeling all the same. Examples of a confusing touch could be:
 - From a relative who is nice most of the time but insists on kissing a child on the lips.
 - From a nice, affectionate uncle that wants a child to continually sit on his lap.
 - When a child’s family member insists on bathing a child who can clearly bathe themselves
 - Indication could include that the child does not want the mother to continue to see or touch their body.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

If you ever have a situation where your Little talks to you about any abuse or violence they are subjected to, contact BBBS immediately. Together, our response to the disclosure by a child can prevent negative outcomes for the child and their family. For that reason, it’s critical that volunteers follow our BBBS protocols on reporting abuse.

Abuse Reporting Actions:

1. Volunteers should call their respective state’s Child Protective Services immediately.
 - a. Indiana: Department of Child Services Hotline at **800-800-5556**.
 - b. Michigan: Children’s Protective Services at **855-444-3911**.
 2. Next, the volunteer should contact BBBS and ask for the Regional Director of Programs or a Match Support Specialist.
 - a. If after business hours, contact BBBS as soon as possible the next business day. CEO will contact legal counsel.
- BBBS will also contact local law enforcement and/or Child Protective Services and solicit guidance with respect to handling the interview of the child and contact with the alleged perpetrator to prevent interference with vital investigative matters.

- The child will be interviewed by law enforcement and/or
- If the alleged perpetrator is the volunteer, BBBS will close the match and notify all parties by certified letter that they are not to have further contact until further notification.
- If the alleged perpetrator is someone other than the volunteer, BBBS will provide additional support and guidance to the volunteer as necessary.

Categories of Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse touching can fall into two categories:

NON-TOUCHING

- Showing a child pictures or movies with people doing sexual things
 - The pictures/movies can have adults, children or both acting in them.
- Having a child watch adults or other children doing sexual things.
- Speaking to a child about sexual things, like an obscene phone call.
- Taking pictures of a child in various stages of undress whether or not the child is engaged in sexually explicit acts (pornography).
- Watching a child whether dressed or in the process of (un)dressing (voyeurism).
- Exposing a penis, buttocks, vagina or breasts to a child for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification.

TOUCHING

- Deliberately brushing by a child in a way to cause contact between the abuser's penis, buttocks, vagina or breasts and the child (generally both individuals are clothed).
- Touching or fondling a child's penis, buttocks, vagina or breasts.
- Having a child touch or fondle the abuser's penis, buttocks, vagina or breasts.
- Masturbating a child manually (using one's hand) or orally (using one's tongue).
- Having a child manually or orally masturbate another child, teen or adult.
- Inserting a finger, penis or other object into a child's vagina or anus.
- Having a child insert her or his finger, penis or other object into the abuser's vagina or anus.

It is important for children to know about the different parts of their bodies. It is also important that they know the correct words for private parts: penis, anus, buttocks, vagina and breasts.

Support Networks

A Support Network is a group of people who are ready, willing and able to help one another, particularly in time of need and support. This group of people can consist of blood-related family members, other extended relatives, Bigs, friends, teachers, doctors, and policemen.

A Support Network will give children a group of individuals to whom they can turn for help during sad and troubled times—especially if a parent is not nearby in the time of crisis. These Support Networks let children know they are not alone.

In EMPOWERING children to protect themselves from child sexual abuse, it is essential that every child have a list of the name, address and phone number of each person who makes up their Support Network.

How to Help Children Prevent Sexual Abuse

- Build self-esteem
- Teach body ownership.
 - Use proper names for body parts and establish boundaries
 - Ask for hugs, tell them it's okay to say 'no'
 - encourage handshakes with permission
 - allow the child to identify their space.
- Teach safe and unsafe touches.
- Teach a child that 'NO' is okay if they don't want touched.
- Teach a child to trust their gut instincts.
- Teach a child to report uncomfortable feelings to a trusted adult
- Teach a child to talk about and identify their feelings.
- Screen people who have access to children.
- **Listen to children!!**
 - Do not discount or blame them if they report abuse.

Children - Ages & Stages

If you haven't had recent experience with a child in the age group you'll be matched with, we have some information to help you work successfully with your Little. Keep in mind that they are generalizations. While they may provide a description of children in general, you may encounter something slightly different with your Little. This does not mean that there is something wrong with your Little. It may mean that they are not like the average child. Sometimes a child's development may be delayed because of trauma or negative experiences or simply a slower or faster development than others, so the stage they're in at present may not correlate to their age in years.

Child Development Which Can Affect Your Match Ages 6-12

Between the ages of 6 and 12, the child's world expands outward from the family as relationships are formed with friends, teachers, coaches, caregivers, and others. Because their experiences are expanding, many factors can alter children's actions and affect how they learn to get along. Some situations can create stress and affect self-esteem. The middle childhood period is a time to prepare for adolescence. Children develop at various rates. Some children seem very mature while others seem immature. During this stage, behavior may depend on the child's mood, his or her experience with various types of people, or even what happened that day.

Developmental Aspects of Middle Childhood

Social & Emotional Development

- There are signs of growing independence.
 - Children are becoming so "worldly" that they typically test their growing knowledge with back talk and rebellion.
- Common fears include the unknown, failure, death, family problems, and rejection.
- Children average five best friends and at least one "enemy," who often changes from day to day.
- Children define themselves in terms of their appearance, possessions, and activities.
- Inner control is being formed and practiced each time decisions are made.
- To win, lead, or be first is valued.

- Children try to be the boss and are unhappy if they lose.
- Children's feelings are hurt easily.
 - There are mood swings, and children often don't know how to deal with failure.

You Can: Give children positive feedback for successes. Talk about self-control and making good decisions.
Ask: "How could you do that differently next time?"

Physical Development

- Children recognize that there are differences between boys and girls.
- Children have difficulty balancing high-energy activities and quiet activities.
- Children need about 10 hours of sleep a night.
- Muscle coordination and control are uneven and incomplete in the early stages, but children become almost as coordinated as adults by middle childhood.
- Poor nutrition can have behavioral consequences such as irritability, apathy, decreased social responsiveness, anxiety, and attention deficits.

You Can: Avoid stereotyping girls into particular activities and boys into others. Let children choose what they want to be involved in. It is important to help children feel proud of who they are and what they can do.

Mental Development

- Children begin to think about their own behavior and see consequences for actions.
- Children learn best if they are active while they are learning.
- 6-8 year olds can rarely sit for longer than 15-20 minutes for an activity. Attention span gets longer with age. Toward the beginning of middle childhood, children may begin projects but finish few.
- Children can focus attention and take time to search for needed information.
- Children begin to build a self-image as workers. If encouraged, this is a positive in later development of career choices.

You Can: Ask "What if . . .?" or "How could we solve this?" type of questions.

Child Development Which Can Affect Your Match

Ages 13-18

Developmental Aspects of Adolescence

Social & Emotional Development

- Teens need to establish identity.
 - The question of "Who am I?" is not one that teens think about at a curious level.
 - Teens may become involved in multiple hobbies or clubs.
 - To find out what they are good at, teens may try many activities.
 - Teens' interests also change very quickly.
- Teens need to establish autonomy.
 - Some equate this with rebellion.
 - Rather than severing relationships, establishing autonomy during the teen years really means becoming an independent and self-governing person within relationships.
 - You will see teens begin to spend more time with their friends than their families.
- Teens need to establish intimacy.
 - Many people, including teens, equate intimacy with sex.
 - Intimacy and sex are not the same.
 - Intimacy is first learned within the context of same-sex friendships, and then utilized in romantic relationships.
 - Friendships provide the first setting in which young people can practice social skills to those that are their equals.

You Can: Encourage teens' involvement in groups and activities. Praise them for their efforts as well as their abilities. Help teens explore career goals and options. Take them to your work so they can see what adults do.

Physical Development

- During adolescence, teens experience changes in their physical development at a rate of speed unparalleled since infancy.
- They develop secondary sex characteristics.
- Their brain continues to grow.
 - Research suggests that connections between neurons affecting emotional, physical, and mental abilities are incomplete.
 - This could explain why teens seem to be inconsistent in controlling their emotions, impulses, and judgments.
- Teens frequently sleep longer because their bodies need to conduct the interval work required for rapid growth.
 - On average, teens need about 9.5 hours of sleep a night.
- Teens ask more direct questions about sex.
 - At this stage, teens are trying to figure out their sexual values.

You Can: *Encourage and model physical activities. As they gain coordination, they will become more comfortable with their changing bodies. Be understanding of their need for physical space. Do not take it personally if your Little is not as affectionate as they were earlier.*

Mental Development

- Teens begin to develop advanced reasoning skills.
 - It includes a more logical thought process.
- Teens also begin thinking about the abstract concepts.
 - Faith, trust, beliefs, and spirituality.
 - They become more “justice” oriented.
 - They are quick to point out inconsistencies between adults’ words and their actions.
 - They have difficulty seeing shades of gray.
- Teens begin to think about what they are feeling and thinking.
 - They learn to develop strategies to improve learning.
 - This can make them more self-conscious, feeling like others are watching or thinking about them.

You Can: *Don’t take it personally when teens discount your experience. Try to empathize and listen to their concerns. Provide them opportunities to get involved.*

Talking to Your Child about Sexual Abuse

Talking to your child about sexual abuse may be hard to do, but the lifetime benefits to your child far outweigh the uneasiness of doing so.

‘When do I start?’ You need not wait until your child begins to ask questions about abuse, because it is unlikely they will ask. You may begin at a very young age by discussing body parts while changing diapers or giving baths. More informative discussions can begin when a child is ready to understand.

‘Where do I begin?’ Combine information about sexual abuse with other safety information. As you talk with your child, you can listen for words or phrases that mean something different to you than the child. You can begin with ‘Sometimes people will do things that do not seem right and I...’

‘How do I start?’ It is easier if you do not limit yourself to talking about abuse as an isolated topic. Introduce the subject slowly with the other safety rules in casual conversation while eating or driving in the car.

Playing the ***‘What If?’ game*** is a way for you to find out what the child already knows and allows you to clear up any misinformation. For example: *‘What if your babysitter asked you to take off your clothes?’*

For example, ask your child:

- *What if you were at home alone and the telephone rings . . .what would you do?*
- *What if you were babysitting your brother or sister and he or she has an accident and falls down. . .what would you do?*
- *What if you see a friend of yours steal something from the store . . . what would you do?*
- *What if a police officer comes to your door and you are home alone . . . what would you do?*
- *What if you get lost from your mother in the shopping mall. . .what would you do?*
- *What if someone you know tries to get you to go for a ride with him/her . . . what would you do?*
- *What if a stranger asks you to help him/her look for a lost puppy. . .what would you do?*
- *What if you are riding your bike a few blocks away from home and hurt yourself really bad . . . what would you do?*
- *What if a friend of your gave you drugs to take . . . what would you do?*
- *What if someone you knew asked if he or she could take pictures of you undressed . . . what would you do?*
- *What if your family member said that if you did not touch his/her private parts, he/she would make your brother or sister do it . . . what would you do?*
- *What if a trusted adult asked you to do inappropriate things and keep it a secret . . . what would you do?*
- *What if someone you know, like a friend of your parents, tries to touch your private parts . . . what would you do?*
- *What if your older brother forced you to do things that made you feel uncomfortable . . . what would you do?*

What Your Child Should Know

- 1) Children need to know the proper names of all the body parts including the private areas (parts covered by a bathing suit). Lack of acceptable names of private parts suggests to a child it is not okay to talk about these body parts. Without the words to talk about parts of their body, it is difficult for children to tell us if someone has tried to touch them.
- 2) The private area should be touched only if the child needs help in bathing, going to the restroom, or is receiving medical attention. If someone touches the child's private areas for any other reason, the child should tell.
- 3) Give your child permission to trust their feelings and decisions. If anyone makes them do something he/she does not want to do or makes him/her feel uncomfortable, it is okay for him/her to tell the person 'No'.
- 4) It is imperative your child knows he/she can talk about behavior that makes him/her uncomfortable. If children know they can talk to you or another adult and you will believe them, they are more likely to report. They need to know someone will listen without blaming them or getting upset with them.
- 5) Children need to understand they are not to blame if someone tricks, bribes, or manipulates them into a sexual contact. To convince them of this you can say, in as many ways as possible, if someone touches them in a sexual way and they
did not stop it for whatever reason, it is not their fault.

Secrets involving inappropriate touching should never be kept. Teach children the difference between a surprise and a secret.

Let's work together as a family and talk about SAFETY!!

With your child, complete the following:

Child's Name: _____

My Support Network:

Name: _____ Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Special Rules in our house:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Ways a child can say 'Stop' or 'No'

Other words used for private parts (slang words):

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is a sexual abuser?

- A child abuser can be **ANYONE** (father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, brothers, sisters, aunts uncles, grandparents, cousins, neighbors, coaches, teachers, preachers, doctors, nurses, big brothers, big sisters, grocery store clerks...**ANYONE**).
- Most abuse is done by men, but women have also been known to sexually abuse children.
- A child sexual abuser is usually someone that the child knows.
- Strangers can also be sexual abusers; it is always a good idea to be careful around people who are unknown.
- A child sexual abuser is someone who has many problems and needs special help to stop sexually abusing children and teens.
- A child sexual abuser is someone who should be reported to a child's parents, the police and the Child Protective Services office in the child's local area.

Who can get sexually abused?

- Any child or teen under the age of 18 years can be at-risk of being sexually abused.
- For every three girls, one will be sexually abused before she turns 18 years old.
- For every six boys, one will be sexually abused before he turns 18 years old.
- Both boys and girls are hurt by sexual abuse.

Where does child sexual abuse happen?

- A child can be sexually abused **ANYWHERE** (friend or family member's house, the doctor's, school, church, home)
- MOST CHILDREN KNOW THE PERSON THAT IS SEXUALLY ABUSING THEM.

How does the child sexual abuse happen?

- Child abuse can happen when the sexual abuser **tricks** a child into a sexual situation
 - EXAMPLE: A babysitter tells a child to change his or her clothes then walks into the child's room while he or she is changing clothes.
- Child sexual abuse can happen when the sexual abuser **coaxes** a child into a sexual situation.
 - EXAMPLE: A father keeps telling his daughter that he is the one who should show her what sex is all about before she gets into trouble with a boy.
- Child sexual abuse can happen when a sexual abuser **manipulates** a child into a sexual situation.
 - EXAMPLE: A brother spends a lot of time playing, including wrestling with his sister. He uses wrestling as an excuse to touch his sister's breasts, buttocks and vagina.
- Child sexual abuse can happen when the sexual abuser **threatens** a child into a sexual situation.
 - EXAMPLE: A child's stepfather tells his stepdaughter that if she does not have sex with him, he will have sex with the child's little brother or sister.
- Child sexual abuse can happen when the sexual abuser **forces** a child into a sexual situation.
 - EXAMPLE: A grandmother makes her grandson take off all his clothes and lay in bed with his naked grandmother.

How does a child who has been sexually abused feel???

- Sad about being betrayed.
- Guilty for taking part in the sexual activity.
- Scared about what happened and that it will happen again.
- Hurt, both physically and emotionally.
- Numb, as the child tries to make believe he or she is another person as a way to live with the sexual abuse.
- Angry about being tricked, deceived or forced into sexual activity.
- Alone as if no one else in the world has been sexually abused but her or him; abandoned by those the child trusts.
- At fault for causing the sexual abuse (CHILDREN ARE NEVER AT FAULT).
- Confused because the child may want to be close to the sexual abuser for love and affection but doesn't quite understand what is occurring or that it is wrong.
- Like running away or killing himself/herself just to avoid the abuse.
- Depressed
- Worthless, inadequate, insecure and ugly.

What can a child do if he/she is sexually abused?

- Do not blame him/her for the abuse.
- Tell a parent, family member, big brother/big sister or someone else the child trusts about the abuse. **NEVER KEEP ABUSE A SECRET!!!**
- Try to keep from being alone with the abuser.
- Go to a therapist, school counselor or social worker for help in getting over the abuse.

Thank you for caring about *EMPOWERING* your child with the knowledge and skills necessary to better protect themselves!!!