



CAREGIVERS HANDBOOK

2023



WELCOME!

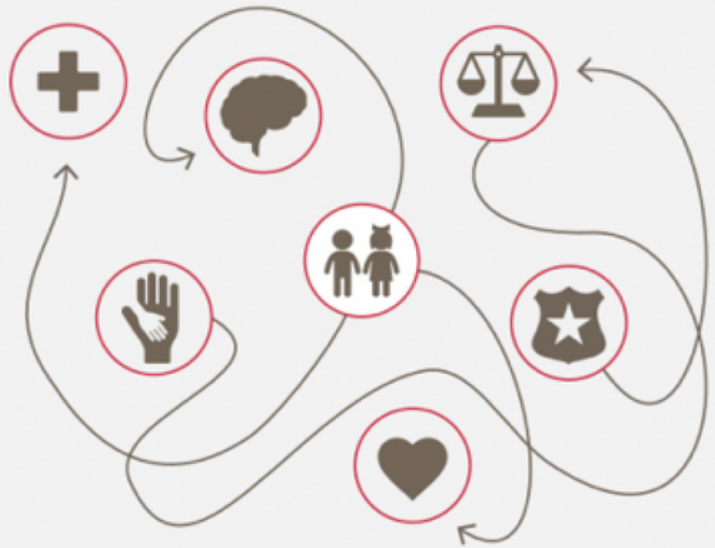
Your child is at The Tree House (CAC) because of concerns about possible abuse or was a witness to violence. This handbook was developed to increase caregivers' understanding of child abuse and the traumatic impact abuse has on children, caregivers, and their loved ones in order to improve outcomes for children.

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MORE INFORMATION CAN BE
FOUND IN LINKS PROVIDED

Without CACs



With CACs





The Tree House, Inc. strives to provide the best quality services to our community in a child and family friendly environment.

Forensic Services
Family Services
Clinical Services
Community Outreach Opportunities

For a complete list of our services
please visit our webpage [here](#).

Collaborate with
our partner
agencies and
programs to
help children
and families

Use Best
Practices
to allow a
safe space to
communicate
about abuse

GOALS

To support
children and
families in
understanding
the criminal
justice process

Help make the
process as
comfortable as
possible and
promote healing
for families

OUR TEAM APPROACH

Helping abused children and their families requires an approach that addresses the physical, emotional and legal dimensions of abuse. It requires a coordinated response from experienced professionals to reduce stress throughout the investigation and intervention process. The Tree House Child Advocacy Center, or CAC, works in partnership with all the necessary agencies, including law enforcement, prosecutors, social workers, advocates, educational support professionals, medical and mental healthcare professionals, and other specialists during an investigation of abuse/neglect.

When a child discloses abuse or abuse is suspected, it can be an uncertain time for the entire family. The Tree House, Inc. offers Forensic Interviews and Advocacy services to help children and families get through this time. When suspected abuse is reported to law enforcement and/or the Department of Family and Children Services the next step is to have the child come to The Tree House, Inc. for a Forensic Interview. During a Forensic Interview, a highly trained professional will have a recorded conversation with the child to gather a statement of any possible abuse that occurred or was witnessed. The referring agencies are present at the time of the Forensic Interview to coordinate a response. We want children to feel comfortable at our center, referring agencies will not meet with children during their visit.



When child abuse occurs, it affects the entire family unit. Research demonstrates that 90% of abusers are a family member or someone the child knows and trusts. The Tree House, Inc. provides victims advocacy services to provide support and education to caregivers during this process. The Family Advocate will meet with caregivers prior to the interview and after the interview to offer support and help provide any resources that the family may need. The Family Advocate will continue to be assessable to the family even after the Forensic Interview.

Although Forensic Medical Exams are not provided at The Tree House, Inc., if a child is in need of an exam we will accompany the child and family to provide additional emotional support. Children are referred to Forensic Medical Exams by the multi-disciplinary team and are conducted at SANE-INC.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Touching a child in a sexual manner, or having sexual relations with the child is sexual abuse and includes any behavior toward the child for sexual stimulation. This type of abuse is characterized by fondling, forced sexual acts, and indecent physical exposure. Whether the abuse occurs as an isolated incident or as repetitive conduct that continues for years, both types are considered sexual abuse of a child. Often, the perpetrators are the child's relatives or people closest to the family – individuals who no one imagined would commit such deeds. These behaviors in a child can signal sexual abuse: knowledge or promotion of sexual behavior premature for his/her age; sudden difficulty with toilet habits in a young child; pain or itching, bruises or bleeding in the genital area. Other symptoms are trouble sitting or walking, blood in his/her underwear, and sexual abuse of other children.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical Abuse is the deliberate intention to inflict pain. When someone hears the term "child abuse", they most commonly associate it with physical abuse. Wounds, bruises, burns, fractures, and sore muscles are signs of physical abuse, but abuse can also result from severe acts of discipline. Injuries that don't coincide with the explanation and untreated medical or dental needs are also red flags for physical abuse.

NEGLECT

Parents or caregivers who are continually unavailable for the child are considered neglectful. Even if the parent is physically present but unavailable or refuses to care for the child or meet his/her needs, neglect occurs. Imagine a young child left at home alone for extended periods of time with no food in the house and an infant sibling to care for—this would be an example of child neglect. The parent may have a substance abuse problem, mental illness, or be too consumed with a job or another person to properly care for the child. The warning signs for neglect include poor growth, weight loss or gain, poor hygiene, lack of appropriate clothing or supplies to meet their needs, stuffing themselves at one meal and hiding food for later, or stealing food or money. Neglect is the most common type of child abuse.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Behaviors toward the child that cause mental anguish are considered emotional abuse (also called psychological abuse). Examples of emotional abuse are shouting often at the child, withholding kindness or affection, extended periods of silence, and harsh jokes at the expense of the child. Calling the child names or making other demeaning remarks can be termed emotional abuse and usually results in low self-esteem. Children who have been emotionally abused may suffer from depression or desperately seek affection. Other symptoms include social withdrawal and delayed or inappropriate emotional development.



FY2021-2022 Annual Report At-A-Glance

8.6K

Services
Provided

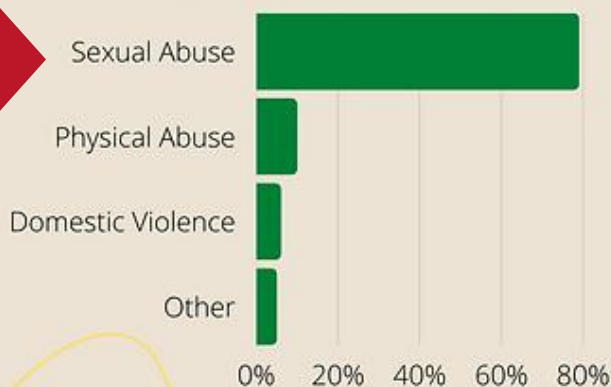
853

Children and
Caregivers Served

\$25K

Financial
Assistance

Types of Abuse for Forensic & Clinical Services



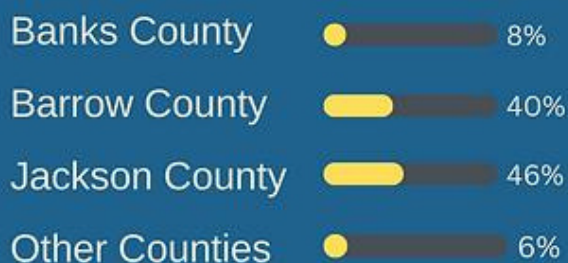
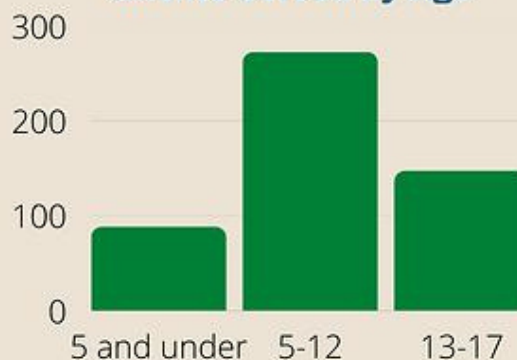
2,143 Forensic Services

1,877 Clinical Services

3,209 Family Visitations Services

1,390 In-home Parenting Services

Clients Served by Age



2022
Raised
\$121,700

Financial Assistance

\$1,500 Drug and Alcohol Treatment

\$2,940 Clothing, Food, Education

\$4,225 Rent, Shelter, and Utility Assistance

\$16,335 Transportation Assistance



The Piedmont Judicial Circuit is fortunate to have a group of highly trained professionals working in the area of crimes against children. Each month these professionals meet to discuss cases and follow-up on each case. Each time that these professionals meet, they place the child's needs above any other goal. They make sure that every facet of the investigation and every need of the child is being met.

WHO ARE THESE PROFESSIONALS?

1 THE CASE MANAGER

DFCS case managers are there to help you protect your child and ensure their safety. Your case manager will conduct interviews, develop safety plans, provide resources and referrals, and follow-up to make sure your child is safe from abuse.

2 LAW ENFORCEMENT

Both the Sheriff's Office and local Police Departments have investigators with specialized training on the team. They interview non-offending caregivers, suspects, and other witnesses to gather evidence of alleged abuse. The investigator will make charging decisions based on the evidence that they collect.

3 MENTAL HEALTH

Counseling is a vital part of the healing and understanding process for children who have been abused. Therapists participate in meetings to help decide how the abuse has affected the child and family and what can help them in the healing process.

4 THE FAMILY ADVOCATE

The Family Advocate at The Tree House will act as a point person for you to contact with any needs you or your child may have. By monitoring your case, the Family Advocate will make sure the team is taking a comprehensive and child-sensitive approach to your case.

5 THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The DA has the final decision as to whether criminal charges will be prosecuted. Consideration is given to many factors which will affect the likelihood of success in court, including the child's ability and willingness to testify, presence of medical evidence, whether the suspect confessed or may confess, and whether there are other witnesses. The Assistant District Attorney (ADA) assigned to your case will be representing the state in any hearings or trials related to your child's case. The ADA should communicate with you about any hearings, case dispositions, or trial dates in a timely manner. See the Crime Victim's Bill of Rights (included in a subsequent page) for more information.

6 THE FORENSIC INTERVIEWER

The Forensic Interviewer has specialized training in how to talk with children in regards to allegations of child abuse and are able to testify to these conversations.



WHAT IS A FORENSIC INTERVIEW?

A forensic interview is a fact-finding conversation conducted by a specially-trained Forensic Interviewer in a child-friendly manner. The interview is designed to provide the child an opportunity to talk about the reason for their visit to the CAC. The Forensic Interviewer strives to make the child feel as comfortable as possible while gathering information to determine what may have occurred. Questions are asked in a non-leading manner that meet the child's skill and developmental ability.

- Allow the child to tell their story in a non-threatening environment.
 - Is legally defensible in court and/or criminal proceedings.
- Minimizes the number of times a child is interviewed and limits the number of people who must directly interview a child.
 - Is conducted in the child's primary language, whenever possible. (For non-English proficient children, an interpreter will assist.)
 - Helps coordinate services for a child and family.

7 THE SANE NURSE

The exam for sexual abuse involves a regular check-up with a magnification of the genital area. This exam is not usually traumatic. Remember, however, that an exam may not indicate if a child has been abused; in fact, most forensic medical exams have normal findings. One advantage of an exam, however, is that it allows the nurse to assure your child that their body is okay, which can be beneficial for the healing process of the child.



What is A Forensic Medical Exam (FME)?

A specialized exam conducted by a professionally trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner utilizing specialized equipment for accurate analysis and evidence collection. All children who are suspected victims of child sexual abuse are entitled to a specialized medical evaluation, called a forensic medical exam. A FME is conducted when a child has disclosed sexual or severe physical abuse and deemed necessary by the team. The FME is a non-invasive, comprehensive medical exam, conducted by our medical service provider, who has specialized training in the evaluation of child sex abuse. If abuse has occurred in the past 120 hours, then a SANE may conduct a medical exam to evaluate & collect evidence. However, if the abuse occurred more than 120 hours then a non-emergent medical exam can be conducted by the provider. The exam takes place in a comfortable & child friendly exam room. There are never any restraints placed on the child, and the child can choose at any time if they would like to stop the exam. The forensic medical exam is not invasive and should not cause the child pain.



THE PROCESS

The investigative and legal process can be confusing. Keep in mind, these are the basic steps of an investigation, they may vary from case to case. If you have any questions about what is happening in your investigation, you may call your case manager, investigator, or family advocate for updates. When somebody reports suspicion of abuse to authorities—either DFCS, law enforcement, or both a Forensic Interview can only be scheduled by LE or DFCS and is conducted at The Tree House. Your child may be referred for counseling services at The Tree House or to another counseling agency. A medical exam (SANE) may be conducted, if necessary. The investigative team will make determinations on the necessity of a medical exam.

DFCS Investigation: the purpose of this investigation is to ensure your child is safe and protected from further abuse. Usually, your case manager will create a safety plan to make sure your child remains safe from the alleged abuser. Safety plans vary according to the situation, but generally ensure that the child will have NO contact with anyone who may be of danger to them. It is the caregiver's responsibility to make sure the safety plan is followed. The case manager will determine whether the allegations of abuse are substantiated (information gathered indicates abuse) or unsubstantiated (information gathered does not support abuse). If substantiated— the case manager will determine if the child will be protected and safe in the home. If so, the child may remain home. If not, the child may be removed and placed with another relative or in a temporary foster care situation. If the child has been removed— the case manager will work with the non-offending caregiver to create a safety plan so that the child may return home.

Criminal Investigation: the purpose of this investigation is to be objective, gather the facts, and uphold the law. Here are the steps that are involved with a criminal investigation: The investigator will gather evidence and interview anyone who may have information regarding the allegations, including the suspect, to determine if the allegations are supported by evidence. If not, the case may be closed. If evidence does exist to support the allegations, the suspect may be arrested. Today, it is not uncommon for law enforcement to obtain cell phones from all parties in an investigation to determine whether evidence is present on cellular devices. In most cases, any collected devices are returned in a timely manner. Once arrested, a bond hearing is set. The bond hearing is held to determine whether the offender will remain in jail until the trial or be released on a bond. The Judge may grant bond or deny a bond. Another consideration is a no-contact bond, which if issued, the offender will violate the conditions of his bond if they come into contact with the victim and will be sent back to jail. No contact bonds are standard in child abuse cases. It is possible that a bond, or bond conditions, could be modified over time. The first appearance in Magistrate Court must be held within 72 hours of the arrest to inform defendants of their rights and the charges against them. The defendant may plead 'guilty' or 'not guilty.' The Magistrate Court preliminary hearing determines if there is probable cause to 'bind the case' over to Superior or State Court.

Prosecution: the purpose of prosecution is to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. The case is presented to a Grand Jury. The Grand Jury is made up of 23 citizens who review new cases to determine whether there is enough evidence to have the case indicted or "true billed" or if it should be dismissed or "no billed". If indicted, the defendant is arraigned. At this time, the defendant is called before the Judge and enters a plea. If the defendant pleads 'guilty' then he/she may be sentenced at that time or a set date. If the defendant pleads 'not guilty' then the case will go to trial. Before trial week, the Judge holds a calendar call. At this time, defendants are asked if they are ready for the trial and if they would like to enter a guilty plea. When ready, the case will go to criminal trial. The DA's office will help you to understand the trial procedures. Our team of professionals will make sure that your child is thoroughly prepared to handle the emotional stress of a court appearance. Even though emotional healing may have begun, the time it takes to get a case to court may reopen some wounds for your child. Be sure to let your child know that you are available to talk about some of these feelings. The DA's office and The Tree House are available to make them feel more comfortable with what will happen during the trial. At this time, your child can get a preview of the courtroom to better understand all of the people involved and how the trial will progress.

The most important thing to have during the legal process is patience. It is a long process, that may bring up a wide range of emotions for you and your child. Always remember that your child's well being should be your first objective.

HOW DOES THE CAC MODEL WORK?



WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

In Georgia, Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) occurs when a person engages a child (under the age of 18) in acts to satisfy their sexual desires. The definition of child molestation in GA includes 3 basic areas:

- When any person, adult or child, forces, coerces or threatens a child to engage in any type of sexual activity at his or her directions. *While a child might not be forced or coerced, he or she is not (by legal definition) capable of giving consent until the age of 16.
- Involving children in inappropriate touching (clothed or unclothed), penetration using any object, forcing sexual activity between children, or asking the child to view or read or to participate in the production of pornographic materials.
- A person commits the offence of child molestation when he or she does ANY immoral or indecent act to or in the presence of or with any child with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desires of either the child or the person.

SIGNS SOMETIMES SHOWN BY CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

Here are some signs that children who have been sexually abused sometimes show. As a parent, you may recognize that your child has displayed some of these signs. Parents often blame themselves for not recognizing signs of abuse; however, every child is different and some children may not present with any of these signs. Research shows that the most important factor to a child's healing is a supportive and believing caregiver.

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

Sleeping Problems or Nightmares
Constipation
Bed-Wetting
Change in Appetite
Self-Mutilation
Difficulty walking or sitting
Pain or itching in genital area
Bloody underclothing
Drug and Alcohol Use

BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

Excessive masturbation
Clinging to parents
Withdrawal from others
Lying
Avoidance of friends
Sexually inappropriate play
Change in school behaviors
Aggressiveness
Rebelliousness

WHO PERPETRATES SEXUAL ABUSE?

85-90% of children are victimized by someone known to them and their families.

Offenders come from all backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. However, a profile of offenders has been created from information gathered from previously convicted offenders.

- Most (not all) are male.
- Most (not all) are familiar with the child such as family or a friend.
- Offenders lack an understanding of consequences for his/her behavior.
- Offenders choose victims that are similar (same age, gender, personality, appearance).
- Offenders are usually emotionally immature.

HOW ABUSERS "GROOM"

A lot of parents wonder how it is possible that their child has been abused even if they have talked with them about sexual boundaries and consent. Offenders are often methodical and manipulative.

Isolating the Child

Abusers find excuses to be alone with the child. For example, they may babysit, invite the child to sleep over, or go camping.

Child Sexual Abuse Fact:

Child abuse happens under very specific, often surprising circumstances.

Most sexual abuse of children occurs in a residence, typically that of a victim or perpetrator.

 DARKNESS TO LIGHT

D2L.org/Statistics

Seeking out Approachable Children

Abusers usually are NOT strangers to the children they abuse.

Instead, abusers usually pick children who are easy to access, like relatives, friends, and neighbors. They may also seek children who have emotional needs for friendship and attention.

Building a Relationship with the Child

Abusers will seek ways to build relationships, including trust and friendship, with children. They may spend time playing with them, volunteer for child care, become their 'buddy,' or buy them candy or presents.

Blaming the child and keeping a secret

Abusers, as adults, have a natural position of power over children. Not only do they use this position to engage children in abuse, they also try to make the child feel responsible so they won't tell. Using secrets or threats, the abuser may tell the child: "If you tell, nobody will believe you" and other coercive statements.

Breaking down Resistance to Touch

Abusers find ways to touch children. For example, they may play games with a lot of physical contact, tickling, or wrestling during which they may sneak sexual touches.

When the touch DOES become sexual, the child is often confused and unsure of the inappropriateness of the touch. Frequently, the abuser will start with a small sexual touches and when the child does not resist or tell somebody, the touches will become increasingly inappropriate, creating additional confusion and feelings of guilt.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is one of the most common forms of child maltreatment. Broadly, physical abuse occurs when a parent or caregiver commits an act that results in physical injury to a child or adolescent, such as red marks, cuts, welts, bruises, muscle sprains, or broken bones, even if the injury was unintentional.

Physical abuse is injury to a child under age 18 by a parent or caretaker which results in bruises, welts, fractures, burns, cuts or internal injuries.



Punishment does not have to lead to physical injury to cause psychological problems. A number of studies have shown that children who are exposed to physical threats and aggressive acts by a caretaker may develop post-traumatic stress reactions and other psychological problems, such as aggressive behavior, depression, and anxiety.

The impact of physical abuse on a child's life can be far-reaching. It is especially devastating when a parent, the person a child depends on for protection and safety, becomes a danger. Some children develop traumatic stress reactions.

Children who've been physically abused may struggle with developing and maintaining friendships. They don't trust authority figures. They don't feel good about themselves or see themselves as worthy. They may blame themselves for the abuse and feel that they must keep what goes on in their families a secret. Reactions vary depending on the age of the child, the kind of abuse, and how long it continues.

Many physically abused children become aggressive themselves or have other behavioral problems. Aggression and "acting out" are very common, but there are a wide range of reactions. Some children show few, if any, reactions. They don't seem to care anymore if they are hit; they've lost the normal fight or flight reactions built-in to protect us from danger. These children may also fail to react to other dangers. They may stop trying to make friends or succeed at school or plan for the future.

Some abused children become anxious and fearful rather than numb and withdrawn. This happens frequently when the abuse has no predictable pattern. A child who never knows when a caregiver will become physically violent, and never knows how far the caregiver will go, has no control. That child may become more anxious.



NEGLECT

We all know that caring for a child no matter what their age is a lot of work. Children need a stable home, with enough food, clothing, supervision and love to keep them safe. When families don't provide these basic needs, we call it neglect. But most people don't understand what neglect truly is and how it can impact a child.

THE IMPACT

Children from babies to teenagers can suffer from neglect. Not having their basic needs met for food and attention can impact a child's health, their physical growth and even their brain development. Children that don't get enough food can have delays in growth and learning. They can even die from malnutrition.



THE FACTS

Neglect is commonly defined as the failure of a parent or caregiver to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision that it impacts the child's health, safety, and well-being.

Some children who are neglected are put in unsafe situations with adults who physically, emotionally or sexually abuse them. Sometimes they see and experience things like drug use, crime, and violence. These impacts often last into adulthood. Children that are neglected often have:

Children need to be held, talked to, comforted when they cry, and fed when they're hungry. They need to go to a doctor if they're sick and get medical treatment if they're hurt. They need to be cared for by someone who will watch out for them and make sure they have what they need.



THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Health and physical development-
Malnourishment, impaired brain development, delays in growth or failure to thrive.

Intellectual and cognitive development-
Poor academic performance, delayed or impaired language development, trouble learning.

Emotional and psychological development-
Deficiencies in self-esteem, attachment, or trust.

Social and behavioral development-
Interpersonal relationship problems, social withdrawal, poor impulse control.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Almost all states provide specific definitions of emotional abuse or mental injury to a child. Typical language used in these definitions is "injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child as evidenced by an observable or substantial change in behavior, emotional response, or cognition and injury as evidenced by anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggressive behavior."

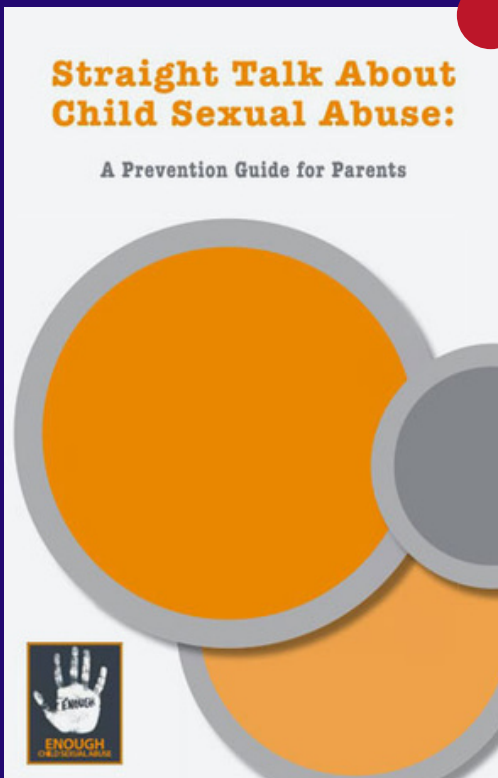


Be a Nurturing Parent

- Help a friend, relative or neighbor
- Help yourself know what to do if your baby cries
- Get involved in developing the services needed to meet the needs of children and families
- Look into parenting resources at your local library and help develop resources if needed
- Promote child abuse prevention programs at school
- Monitor your child's television and video viewing as violent images can harm young children
- Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention program
- Report suspected child abuse or child neglect

Now That You Know

Children are affected by child sexual abuse in many different ways. The single most important factor affecting the child's recovery is the level of support of the caregiver or supportive adult.



Here are some ways to support your child:

- Increase validation of the child's disclosure: you can say "I'm glad you told. I know it was difficult. You are very brave for telling."
- Remind the child that abuse was not their fault, but the fault of the person who abused them.
- Do not expect the child to be 'changed.' Problems that existed before the disclosure will likely continue.
- Be honest with your child. Tell them that you are sad and that they may see you cry, but that you are able to take care of them and you are not mad at them.
- Normalize the child's feelings. Tell them that it is ok to feel the way they do and that other children who have been sexually abused have felt the same way too.
- When the child initiates a conversation about the topic, let them know that they can talk to you about anything, even things that are hard to talk about. Also reassure your child that you believe what they are telling you.
- Reassure the child that they are safe now, and people are working to help maintain their safety.
- Remind the child that you love them. Give hugs with consent. The child may need extra reassurance at this time.

How Parents Sometimes Feel

Just like children, parent's don't always react to the abuse of their children in the same way. In fact, many parents report going through several phases of emotion after their child discloses abuse. You may feel one or many of these at any time; that is normal and ok.

ANGER

This anger may be unimaginable and it might be a long time before it goes away. Do not 'bottle' this anger, but share it instead and be honest with a friend, therapist, or other helping professional. Be cautious about what you share with your children and be sure that they are seeing you cope in a healthy manner.

GUILT and SELF-BLAME

You may feel like it's all your fault and that you did not protect your child. These emotions are perfectly normal, though it is important to remember the offender is responsible for the abuse, not you.

SHOCK, NUMBNESS, REPULSION

You may have memories of being abused as a child or simply can't believe that this has happened to your child. Please seek therapy for yourself so that you may be emotionally available for your child. The Tree House can help you find a qualified therapist at an affordable price. Know that your experience may differ from your child's, everyone experiences abuse differently.

DENIAL

Your first reaction may be to not believe or accept that it happened, particularly if the abuser is a family member. Sometimes parents initially believe that no real harm was done. However, if abuse did occur and steps are not taken to address the problem, there will likely be short and long term consequences.

CONCERN

You may be worried about finances because of lost income, missed work, or other expenses resulting from the abuse. The Tree House and DFCS have resources (i.e Crime Victims Compensation) that may help. Talk with your Family Advocate about how to access these resources.

HELPLESSNESS

Parents often feel like nothing is in their control anymore. Talk with your caseworker, investigator, or The Tree House about concerns, questions, or issues you're feeling. They are there to help you.

HURT and BETRAYAL

It is normal to feel hurt after learning of your child's abuse. You may also have lost a spouse, partner, family member, or friend because of the abuse. It is important to take time to grieve these changes too.

WORKING WITH THE SYSTEM

The human services and criminal systems in the Piedmont Judicial Circuit have spent several years working to better understand how to prevent, identify, and prosecute child abuse. The more cooperation and information you give to the team, the better job they can do in your child's case. Here are some tips for working with professionals in the system.

DO NOT coach your child on what to say. It is important for your child's experience to come out in their words and in their own time. Coaching will only hinder the investigation and may possibly result in repercussions to you or your child.

Give your child permission to tell the investigator everything that has happened. Assure your child that it is not their fault and that they are not to blame and will not be in trouble for anything they say.

When you are asked for information, try to provide as many facts as you can. Don't try to guess if you don't know the answer to a question; it is better to say that you don't know. It is normal to not have answers to every question you may be asked.

Your feelings are important and valid. Feelings give investigators valuable insight, so tell them how you feel and why you feel that way.

Always be honest. Even if the truth is not favorable to yourself or others, in the long run you will be better off with the truth.

Cooperate. You will probably feel as if investigators are prying into your personal life, but this is necessary and vital to the case and to your child's welfare. The sooner the facts come out, the sooner the case can be resolved and you can return to your normal life.

Try not to overreact. It is a difficult time and emotions are probably running high. Losing control can hurt the case and overshadow the needs of your child.

You may feel that people on the investigative team do not care because they avoid showing emotions; however, it is important that they remain objective and calm in the face of extremely emotional situations.

Love, support, and protect your child at all costs. If the alleged offender is an important person to you, it can be very difficult to balance your feelings with the need to protect your child. Remember that your child has only you to make healthy, protective decisions.

In general, after the crime occurs and is reported, and upon initial contact with a victim, any criminal justice agency, meaning an arresting law enforcement agency, custodial authority, investigating law enforcement agency, prosecuting attorney, and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, is responsible for advising him or her of the following:

- That it is possible that the accused may be released from custody prior to trial;
- That victims have certain rights during various stages of the criminal justice system;
- That victims have the right to refuse or agree to be interviewed by the accused, the accused's attorney, or anyone who represents or contacts you on behalf of the accused;
- That victims may be eligible for monetary compensation for certain out-of-pocket losses incurred as a result of their victimization from the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Ask your family advocate for more details and how to apply.
- That after an offender enters the prison system, the victim, or victim's family member, can contact the Parole Board to give views and information about the case, find out what the Board is doing on the case, and request notification of any parole decisions. More information can be obtained about the post adjudication process by contacting the Georgia Office of Victim Services at 404-651-6668 or victimservices@pap.state.ga.us.





CRIME VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS

The Crime Victims Bill of Rights provides legal rights to victims of crime and their families. The key to these rights is to keep the victim informed, including the following:

- The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any scheduled court proceedings or any changes to such proceedings;
- The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of the arrest, release, or escape of the accused;
- The right not to be excluded from any scheduled court proceedings, except as provided by law;
- The right to be heard at any scheduled court proceedings involving the release, plea, or sentencing of the accused;
- The right to file a written objection in any parole proceedings involving the accused;
- The right to confer with the prosecuting attorney in any criminal prosecution related to the victim;
- The right to restitution as provided by law;
- The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay; and
- The right to be treated fairly and with dignity by all criminal justice agencies involved in the case.
- The right to file a motion in the criminal case within 20 days of a court proceeding requesting to be heard if the victim has properly requested notification and is not given notice of said court proceeding.

Victims may be eligible for monetary compensation for certain out-of-pocket losses incurred as a result of their victimization from the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Ask your Family advocate for more information on eligibility requirements and how to file a claim.



TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT BODY SAFETY

We hope that your conversations with your child about body safety will be open and ongoing. Caregivers should have multiple, natural conversations over time so that children know it is safe to talk about these subjects.

- Talk about “safe” and “unsafe” touches rather than “good” or “bad” touches. This helps them to understand what is and is not appropriate.
- Use age-appropriate wording. You can discuss body safety without discussing sexuality. Teach young children that no one should touch them in any area that their bathing suit covers, and that they should never touch anyone else in these area or see pictures or movies that show those areas.
- Teach the difference between healthy and unhealthy secrets. An example is that a surprise party is an okay secret to keep. Secret touching is not okay, or keeping any permanent secrets from parents or caregivers.

My Body Safety Rules

My body is my body and it belongs to me!

I can say, 'No!' if I don't want to kiss or hug someone.
I can give them a high five, shake their hand or blow them a kiss.
I am the boss of my body and what I say goes!



I have a Safety Network

These are five adults I trust. I can tell these people anything and they will believe me.
If I feel worried, scared or unsure, I can tell someone on my Safety Network how I am feeling and why I feel this way.



Early Warning Signs

If I feel frightened or unsafe
I may sweat a lot, get a sick tummy,
become shaky and my heart might
beat really fast.
These feelings are called my Early
Warning Signs. If I feel this way about
anything, I must tell an adult on my
Safety Network straightaway.



Secrets

I should never keep secrets that make me
feel bad or uncomfortable. If someone
asks me to keep a secret that makes me
feel bad or unsafe, I must tell an adult on
my Safety Network straightaway!



Private Parts

My private parts are the parts of my body
under my bathing suit. I always call my
private parts by their correct names.
No one can touch my private parts.
No one can ask me to touch their private
parts. And no one should show me pictures
of private parts. If any of these things happen,
I must tell a trusted adult on my Safety
Network straightaway.



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- Have your child name five people that they could talk to if someone was touching them in an unsafe way. Children are often afraid to tell their parents out of fear of punishment (or because of a threat made by a perpetrator), so it's important for your child to know they can seek out other trusted adults to confide in. Instruct your child that they should keep telling until someone helps them.
- Teach children proper names for body parts so that if they disclose unsafe touching, it will be clear what they are talking about.
- Revisit this safety talk often. Children learn through repetition. How many times do you remind children to look both ways before crossing the street?



DARKNESS TO LIGHT®
END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

CONSENT

Consent is an agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity. Consent should be clearly and freely communicated. A verbal and affirmative expression of consent can help both you and your partner to understand and respect each other's boundaries. consent is about communication. It should happen every time for every type of activity. It's important to discuss boundaries and expectations with your partner prior to engaging in any sexual behavior. Consent cannot be given by individuals who are underage, intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious.

Your body belongs to you.

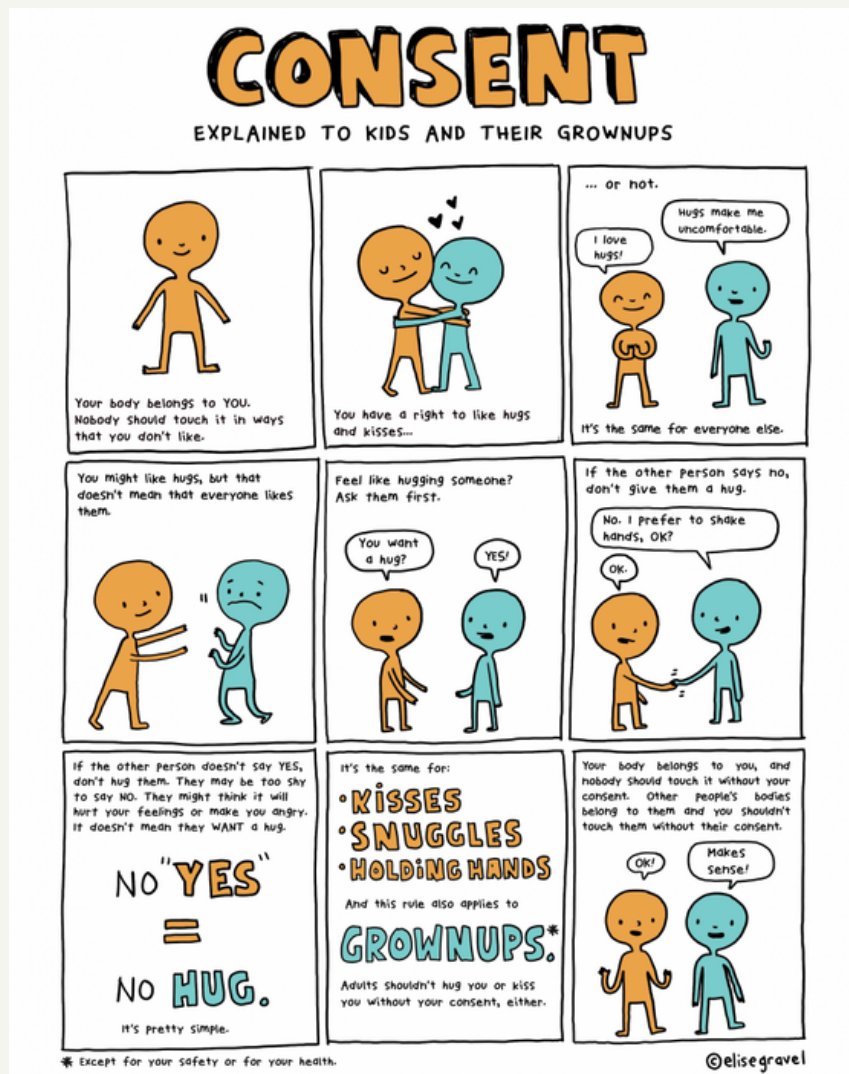
You get to decide what happens to your body.

No one should touch you without permission.

Telling someone not to touch you is NOT rude.

Consent means always choosing to respect others' boundaries.

Respecting someone's boundaries shows that you care about them.



INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MONITOR INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Parental control software
Communicate with your child.
Router monitoring and time scheduling
Web browser filtering

Familiarize yourself with the apps they use
Enable Family Sharing
Monitor social media activities
Encourage learning and creativity
Set Ground rules



NCMEC's CyberTipline is the nation's centralized reporting system for the online exploitation of children. The public can make reports of suspected online enticement of children for sexual acts, child sexual abuse material, child sex trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the internet.

STRONG⁴LIFE

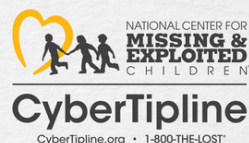


Talk Early and Often
Create an Honest and Open Environment
Communicate Your Values
Be Patient

- **Inappropriate conduct:** The online world can feel anonymous. Kids sometimes forget that they are still accountable for their actions.
- **Inappropriate contact:** Some people online have bad intentions, including bullies, predators, hackers, and scammers.
- **Inappropriate content:** You may be concerned that your kids could find pornography, violence, or hate speech online.

Is a child
being sexually
exploited online?

Report It Here



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

Trauma Responsive

Recognizing that challenging behavior is often a result of adverse childhood experiences and past trauma.

PARENTING A CHILD WITH TRAUMA

Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm. The harm can be physical or emotional, real or perceived, and it can threaten the child or someone close to him or her. Trauma can be the result of a single event, or it can result from exposure to multiple events over time.

BRAIN

Difficulty thinking, learning, and concentrating
Impaired memory
Difficulty switching from one thought or activity to another

BODY

Inability to control physical responses to stress
Chronic illness, even into adulthood

EMOTIONS

Trouble with friendships
Low self-esteem, Depression, Anxiety
Feeling unsafe
Inability to regulate emotions
Difficulty forming attachments to caregivers
Trust issues

BEHAVIOR

Lack of impulse control
Fighting, aggression, running away
Substance abuse
Suicide

COPING SKILLS

Children need our help learning how to manage their feelings and stress. Help them by introducing and practicing healthy coping strategies.

NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

STRONG⁴LIFE™



Children's™
Healthcare of Atlanta



**Child Welfare
Information Gateway**
PROTECTING CHILDREN ■ STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

WHAT IS TRAUMA-FOCUSED THERAPY?

Trauma-Focused Therapy is a specific approach to therapy that recognizes and emphasizes understanding of how traumatic experience impacts a child's mental, behavioral, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. This type of therapy is rooted in understanding the connection between the trauma experience and the child's emotional and behavioral responses. The purpose of trauma-focused therapy is to offer skills and strategies to assist your child in better understanding, coping with, and processing emotions and memories tied to traumatic experiences, with the end goal of enabling your child to create a healthier and more adaptive meaning of the experience that took place in their life.

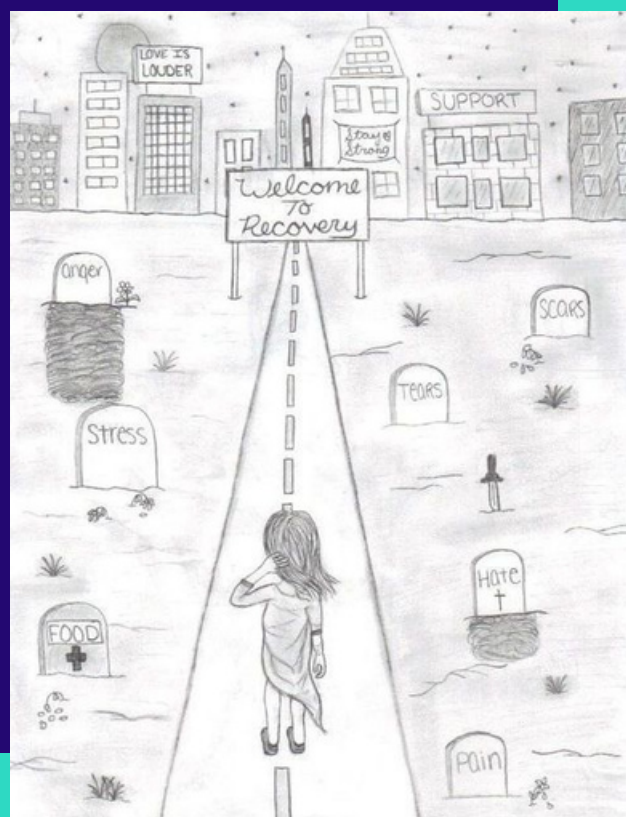
WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

Provide safety, love, and support.

Let them know it is okay to cry or to be mad.

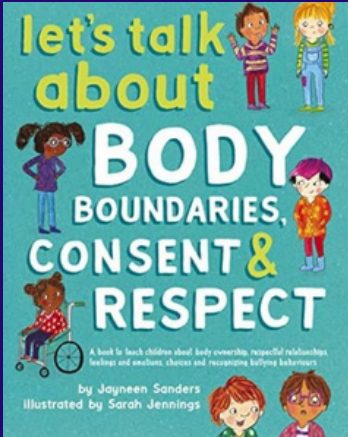
Make sure your child understands it is not their fault.

Do not pressure your child to talk about things.



E
M I believe you.
P It's not your fault.
O I'm glad I know about it.
W I'm sorry this happened to you.
E I will take care of you.
R I'm not sure what will happen next.
I Nothing about YOU made this happen.
N Other children have had similar experiences.
G You don't need to take care of me.
I am upset, but not with you.
M I'm angry at the person who did this.
E I'm sad. You may see me cry. That's all right.
S I will be able to take care of you.
S I'm not mad at you.
A I don't know why the person did this.
G You can still love someone but hate what they
E did to you.
S

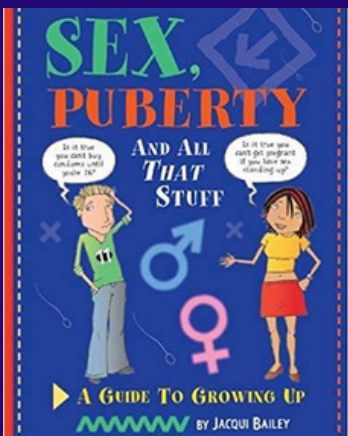
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AGES



C is for Consent.
Don't Touch My Hair!
My Body Belongs to Me from My Head to My Toes.
Your Body Belongs to You.
My Body!
Let's Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent and Respect.
Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept.
I Said No! A Kid-to-kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private.
Do You Have a Secret? (Let's Talk About It!)
NO Trespassing – This Is MY Body!

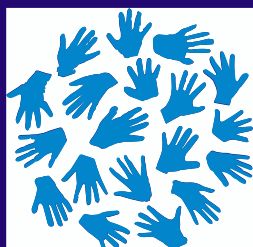


The Body Keeps The Score.
It Didn't Start With You.
What Happened to You?
Getting Past Your Past.
The Mindful Self Compassion Workbook.



HelloFlo: The Guide, Period.
Celebrate Your Body.
The ABCs of LGBT+
Honest Talk About Growing Up and Your Changing Body.
The Body Book for Younger Girls.
American Medical Association's Girls Guide to Becoming a Teen.
Activities and Affirmations for Empowering Strong, Confident Girl.
Consent: The New Rules of Sex Education.
Boys & Sex / Girls & Sex

FOR STATE AND NATIONAL STATISTICS ON CHILD ABUSE



**National
Children's
Alliance®**





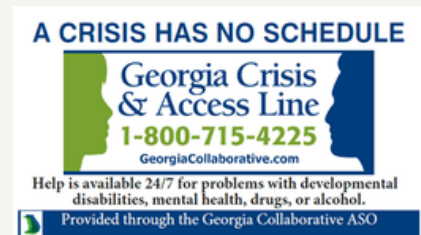
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

BARROW COUNTY RESOURCE GUIDE: CLICK [HERE](#)

BANKS COUNTY RESOURCE GUIDE: CLICK [HERE](#)

JACKSON COUNTY RESOURCE GUIDE: CLICK [HERE](#)

CLICK LOGOS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LISTS OF SERVICES IN OUR AREA



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INTERNET SAFETY APPLICATIONS PLEASE VISIT
INTERNETMATTERS.ORG.

THE TREE HOUSE, INC. DOES NOT ENDORSE ANY PARTICULAR PLATFORM FOR MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA. MANY ARE AVAILABLE, CHOOSE WHAT BEST FITS YOUR FAMILIES NEEDS.

**internet
matters.org**

Law Enforcement

Barrow County Sheriff...770-307-3080

Auburn PD... 770-513-8657

Statham PD...770-725-5992

Winder PD...770-867-2156

Hoschton PD...706-684-6000

Jackson County Sheriff...706-367-6000

Jefferson PD... 706-367-5231

Braselton PD...706-658-2852

Arcade PD ...706-367-1821

Commerce PD...706-335-3200

Pendergrass PD...706-693-4514

Banks County Sheriff...706-677-2248

DFCS

Barrow County...770-868-4222

Jackson County...706-367-3000

Banks County...706-677-2272

DA

Barrow County...770-307-3040

Jackson County...706-387-6288

Banks County...706-677-6205

For a list of counseling resources in our area please see our Family Advocate. Our Family Advocate may be able to provide a list based on specific needs. Also check with your insurance provider for a list of resources that may be covered. Private providers may take certain insurance plans and/or Medicaid or may provide service on a sliding scale.

OUR SUPPORTING PROGRAMS, STATE AGENCIES, COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AND LEADING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

(Please note this is not an exhaustive list, we have many local community partners that enable us to continue our mission.)

Click on each icon for more information



Georgia Department of Human Services
Division of Family & Children Services



The Tree House, Inc. is a non-profit organization, whose mission is to strengthen communities by reducing the occurrence and impact of child abuse through counseling, educating, supporting and nurturing children and families in Northeast Georgia.

The Tree House, Inc. began in 1996 when community members united and began working towards preventing child abuse. Together, they created a child-friendly agency that offered prevention programs, as well as a place for children to come when they disclosed abuse. The Tree House, Inc. now sees hundreds of families each year and offers a variety of services to help children and families heal from child abuse.

The Tree House, Inc. could not serve others without the gracious support of our community partners and individuals.

