

What is Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is an abuse of power. It involves sexual activity forced on a child by either an adult or an older, more powerful child. Because the victims are powerless to stop the abuse and are confused about what is happening they may suffer deep emotional damage even if there is no physical damage.

What are the signs and symptoms of Abuse

- Physical symptoms such as difficulty in walking or sitting, pain in urination frequent psychosomatic illnesses
- Excessive bathing
- Excessive masturbation
- More sexual knowledge than is appropriate for the child's age
- Changes in mood and behavior
- Sleep problems or nightmares
- Feelings of low self worth, talk of being damaged
- Self mutilation or cutting
- Running
- Exceptional secrecy

Why children do not tell when they have been abused:

Children often fear that if they tell, the abuser will harm them or hurt someone they love even their favorite pet. Abusers use many tactics to gain access to children and to ensure their silence; these tactics include threats, bribery and physical force. Some abusers "groom" their victims by disguising behaviors as educational; or as a type of punishment or a reward. They may tell a child that cooperating is a way they can repay favours.



Where you can go for help

Rural Abuse Helpline and Outreach
1-877-33-TALK NOW
1-877-338-2556

Huron Perth Children's Aid Society
Huron County
519-524-7356 or 1-800-265-5198
Perth County
519-271-5290 or 1-800-668-5094

Huron Perth Centre for Children and Youth
Huron
519-482-3931
Perth
519-273-3373

Huron County Health Unit
519-482-3416 or 1-877-837-6143

Perth District Health Unit
519-271-7600 or 1-877-271-7348

Rural Response for Healthy Children
519-482-8777 or 1-800-479-0716

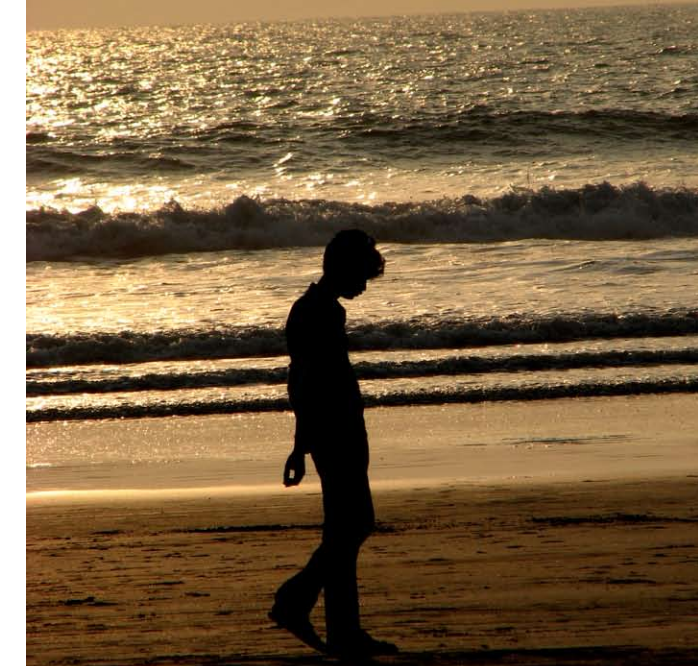
Victim Services of Huron County
519-524-4108

Victim Services of Perth County
519-271-9998 or 1-866-387-7773

Optimism Place
519-271-5550 or 1-800-265-8598

Women's Shelter, Second Stage Housing & Counselling Services of Huron
519-524-6245 or 1-800-265-5506

If Your Child Has Been Abused...



Let's Talk

Rural Abuse Helpline and Outreach

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How does Sexual Abuse Affect Children

One of the reasons sexual abuse is so damaging to children is that almost always the abuser makes the child keep it a secret. The shared secret then becomes a source of shame and lowers the child's sense of self worth

The damage may take many forms

- Guilt – children may feel they are in some way responsible.
- Fear - If the abuser has told them that something terrible will happen if they reveal the secret they may be afraid.
- Grief – children may stop seeing the world as a safe and friendly place.
- Anger – because they can't get back at the abuser, they may lash at others.
- Social Problems – because of the trauma of abuse, they may have poor social skills or bullying behaviour.
- Depression – they may seem sad, and less playful. They may lose interest in school, friends and activities.
- Helplessness - because they feel helpless they may become victims for further abuse.



What are the long term consequences of sexual abuse?

- Post traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety disorders such as panic attacks, social phobias
- Victims often lose interest in school and other activities
- Difficulties in trusting others, relationship problems, fears of intimacy
- Unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse and risky sexual behavior
- Chronic health problems including obesity
- Struggles with sexual identity issues
- Running away from home and in some cases turning to prostitution
- Suicide

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

A person who suspects that a child is being sexually abused or is at risk of such abuse is required by law to report such concerns immediately to the Children's Aid Society.

All reports of child sexual abuse are assessed by the Children's Aid Society. In cases where an investigation is required the society works together with the police to ensure that the child is safe and that the family is supported.

In all cases, the person reporting is protected from any kind of legal action, provided the report is not falsely made.

It is important to report abuse to stop the abuse and protect other children. Studies have found that some abusers victimized more than 70 children before anyone listened or recognized the signs and symptoms of abuse.



How can you Help if a child discloses abuse

This is a very emotionally difficult time for the child. The following messages are very important for the child to hear:

- "It is good that you told me"
- "I believe you"
- "It is not your fault"
- "I will do my best to help you"

How can a counselor help you and your child:

We may feel we want to "put the abuse behind us" and forget it ever happened but denying the abuse may lead to problems later in life. It is important that you and your child understand the confusing emotions experienced when the abuse was taking place and afterwards. It is important that child victims of abuse understand that they are not to blame for the abuse; that they are taught ways to protect themselves in the future and that they feel safe to tell a trusted adult if they are abused again.

Counsellors are people trained to listen and help you and your child. Agencies who may assist you with counseling or referring you to a counselor are listed on this pamphlet.