



## How to Talk with Your Children about Child Abuse

### Birth – 3 years

Teach anatomically correct names for body parts. Model Healthy Touching in your home – gentle hands, hugs, holding, kisses goodnight etc.... Share with your children that physical touch should be comforting, encouraging, natural and spontaneous. Let them know the boundaries of using physical touch – for example, we use our hands to be gentle, not to hit or pinch.

### 3 years old – 5 years old

Teach them about appropriate touch. Explain to them that the areas covered by their bathing suit are their private areas and others should not touch them there. The exceptions are bathing help when needed, toileting help when needed and pediatrician visits. Talk about safe people in their lives such as Mom and Dad who want to know about their lives. Establish healthy communication styles now by spending time every day talking with your child without any distractions. Keep your emotions in check as children talk with you so they learn you are willing to hear everything they have to say.

### 5 – 10 years old

Teach about child maltreatment, especially child sexual abuse. Explain how people can make bad choices sometimes – even people we know and love. Encourage your children to tell you if people have asked them to keep things secret from you. Teach children to respect their bodies by modeling respect for your own body and discussing it in your homes. Let children know that sometimes older children want to harm younger children and encourage them to always share if someone has made them feel uncomfortable in anyway. Know who your children's friends are and who is around them when they are not under your supervision or at school.

### 10 – 18 years old

Have honest communications about sexuality, relationships, and respect. Know that even if you have told your children about child sexual abuse, older teenagers can still be victims and the conversations have to continue. Talk to your children about their peer groups and how they perceive relationships. Stay involved in your children's lives and get to know their peers. Ask them directly if they have ever been in a situation where they felt uncomfortable or uneasy. Practice reflective listening to encourage your child to continue to share information.

