

# *TAKING CARE OF* *Me*



**CHILDREN'S  
ADVOCACY CENTER**  
OF DOUGLAS COUNTY

2518 Ridge Ct., Suite 200  
Lawrence, KS 66046  
785-592-3160

# TAKING CARE OF Me

## Sexual Abuse and the Children's Advocacy Center(CAC)

By now, you've probably heard the words "sexual abuse." You may even know that this is the reason you came to the CAC. You visited the CAC because someone who cares about kids heard about your experience. At the CAC, we work to keep kids safe from abuse. We find out what happened by asking lots of questions. Some questions can be hard to answer. We understand that it may be difficult to talk about what happened. That's why we record what you say on a video tape, so you don't have to talk about it so many times. The police use this tape to try to find whoever abused you and make sure that you are safe.

You did the right thing by telling! No matter what happened, it's not your fault. Most adults know it's not your fault. That's why they make laws to protect kids from adults who hurt them.

## So Many Feelings

Kids feel many different things after they have been abused. Sometimes they might feel nervous, confused, or embarrassed because of a touch on a private part of their body.

Sexual abuse is also difficult for parents. They sometimes have new feelings that make them say and do things you don't understand.

- Your parents love you and they get upset when someone tries to harm you. Many parents are angry at the person who hurt you. They may talk about being angry or say mean things about the person who abused you. Remember that parents are trying to work through their own feelings, too.
- Other parents might feel guilty for not being more careful. Parents want to be superheroes, but they're still human. At first, your parents might not let you do anything unless they are around. They just don't want you to get hurt again.

You may have many different feelings after you have been abused. Some of these feelings may be new to you. Your parents may also have emotions that they are feeling for the first time.



## Who is in your Circle of Safety?

Kids can surround themselves with people that they trust to keep them safe. We call this your Circle of Safety. If you are ever hurt again, you can tell people in your Circle of Safety. To build a Circle of Safety, you need people who will listen to you and take action to help keep you safe. The people that make up your Circle of Safety may be friends, family members, people from school, church or temple, along with any other adults in the community who will work to help you stay safe.



## It's Your Body

Sometimes kids see a doctor after being sexually abused. Medical checkups don't have to be scary. In fact, it's a lot like getting an exam for a school or sports physical. The doctor is interested in making sure you are healthy. They will check every part of you from your head to your toes. The doctor will:

- Look in your ears, eyes and mouth.
- Check your heart beat and your breathing.
- Feel your belly and check your arms, legs and back.
- Look at the private parts of your body to make sure that you are okay.

If you are worried about some part of your body, you can talk to the doctor about what worries you. Feel free to ask questions during your checkup. Remember, the purpose of the checkup is to make sure that you are okay and to relieve any worries you or your family might have about what happened to your body. Most times, the doctor won't find anything wrong. If the doctor finds something that needs to be treated with medicine, they will make sure your family knows what medicine you need and how to take it so that you can heal and get better.

# TAKING CARE OF Me

## It's Your Mind

We encourage every child who has been to the Children's Advocacy Center to visit a therapist. A therapist helps you understand any new feelings you may have. Therapists talk with you about what happened and how you feel about it. Sometimes talking is difficult because it brings up painful memories and feelings, but these feelings are important to understand and work through.

Therapists talk about:

- How you feel about what happened
- How to trust others and feel good about yourself
- Different responses people have toward you since they found out what happened

Some therapists talk to you alone. This is your chance to talk with someone who is there to listen and to give you ideas about ways to feel better. Other therapists may speak with you and your parents together. Your parents may visit a therapist by themselves because they have new feelings, too. Some kids or parents decide to skip therapy because they feel "fine". But talking to a therapist is a good idea because it is difficult to handle all of the changes that an abuse experience can have on your life.

## Who You Will Meet

After sexual abuse has happened, kids meet a lot of new people whose job it is to make sure that kids and grown-ups get the help they need. It's natural to feel uncomfortable when talking to strangers. Just remember that their job is to help, not to get you in trouble!

Here are some of the people you might meet besides doctors and therapists:

- An interviewer will talk to you. The interviewer will ask lots of questions and listen carefully to what you say. Their job is to understand exactly what happened. The interview is videotaped because what you say is important. The people trying to help you want to be able to remember exactly what you said.
- A social worker from DCF might talk to you and your family. Their job is to make sure that you are safe when you leave the Children's Advocacy Center.
- A detective will also talk your parents. Their job is to find out if any laws were broken. If the detective thinks that a law was broken, then they will work to keep you and others in the community safe.

# TAKING CARE OF Me

## What Friends Might Say

Parents and therapists can be helpful, but you may also decide to speak with a friend about what has happened. If you decide to talk with someone and start to feel uncomfortable, it's okay to say "I can't talk about it" or "That's not your business." You can also tell them you are glad they care about you, but that you don't want to talk about what happened.

A real friend will understand if you don't tell them what happened. If you talk to a friend, remember that you might say some very private things, so make sure this person won't tell others about your conversations. Only talk with people who will be supportive.

Thank you for taking time to read this book! Please feel free to call us at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Douglas County, 785-592-3160 if you have any questions.

## Acknowledgements

The Children's Advocacy Center of Douglas County would like to recognize the many pioneering agencies that published child guides, which served as a foundation for this publication:

Sunflower House-Shawnee, Kansas

National Children's Advocacy Center-Huntsville, Alabama

