

# APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

No one wants to think or talk about it and it can be hard to even imagine. Yet, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys experience sexual abuse before they reach the age of 18. Most of it occurs within a child's "safe world" of home, school, and approved activities. It most often involves people that the child knows and trusts. This is NOT OKAY and it's why when a child discloses sexual abuse to you it's important to believe them and seek help and here's why:

## The impacts are huge:

### •Psychological

Clinical disorders such as depression, anxiety, dissociation, post-traumatic stress, bipolar, attention deficit/hyperactivity, anorexia, insomnia, as well as various kinds of harmful acting out behaviors, etc.

### •Physical

Severe injuries, infections, neurological damage, and in some cases death

### •Social / Emotional

Inability to trust, social anxiety and phobias, intimacy issues, poor self-esteem, etc.

### •Spiritual

A faith crisis – where was a loving, all-powerful God when I was abused? An inability to develop a loving and trusting relationships with God and with others

Jesus showed us in his life how much he loved children; we follow him by loving and protecting children from the harm of abuse. (See Matt. 18:1-14, Mark 9:33-36, 42) To sexually harm a child is a tragic abuse of power. To hold power, and not use it to protect children is also an abuse of power.

God hears their cries. Do we?

# 12 Things Your Church Can Do To Help Abused Children in Cherokee County

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1. Connect with The Children's Advocacy Center [www.cherokeecountycac.org](http://www.cherokeecountycac.org) ; **256-927-2111**
2. Ask your County what the most pressing needs are for children receiving services. Ask for their top 3 problems. Then ask what is the best way to help.
3. Offer your church building for family meetings or staff training.
4. Offer parenting classes. Open your nursery so parents will have a place for their children while attending your class.
5. Pray on Blue Ribbon Sunday, April 24th. On this day churches pray for the victims of child abuse and for those who rescue them.
6. Start a Grandparent Support group for grandparents while the parents are receiving services from DHR.
7. Family members who agree to care for children under the watchful eye of DHR are referred to Family Based Service. They are not paid as foster parents. They can use help of any kind, from car seats, cribs, bedding, clothing, etc.
8. Toy or Diaper Drives are always welcomed. Toys can be used for foster children's birthdays and/or used in the family visitation rooms. Diapers can be donated to the emergency closet (located at DHR) for foster families.
9. Donate individual snacks and drinks with a long shelf life to The Children's Advocacy Center.
10. Children often work through trauma in play therapy at The Children's Advocacy Center. Consider a donation of Play-Doh, foam art supplies, jewelry and bead kits, sand art kits. Consider a monetary donation for therapy workbooks.
11. Teach your staff the signs of child abuse and call 256-927-1440 to report suspected abuse. It's the law.

**12. Consider opening your home to foster children. For more information, call DHR at 256-927-1440.**



# Things Your Church Should Know About Abused Children

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- 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.
- Over 16000 children die annually from child abuse in the United States. Nearly 80% were under 4 years old.
- Within on year of aging gout, 66% of foster children will be homeless, go to jail, or die
- There are about 382,400 children in foster care in the United States. Cherokee County has 19 children in the foster care system.
- Six million children are reported as abused annually. There were 165 reports in Cherokee County. 1 in 4 girls & 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. The CAC provided services to over 80 in 2021.

We must reach out to the victims of child abuse  
**because...**

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows and their affliction

James 1:27

