

CRIME VICTIMS
RESOURCE CENTER

Spring 2026 Newsletter

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———— APRIL IS ————
SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS
———— AND ————
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION
———— MONTH ————



The real and lasting impact of sexual assault... **IN HER OWN WORDS.**

While we often share statistics about how many individuals are affected by specific crimes, numbers alone don't tell the full story. They don't capture the trauma, guilt, and shame that often accompany a devastating crime like sexual assault. With permission from our former client, we are providing the Victim Impact Statement she presented to the court over a decade ago. If you've ever wondered how a sexual assault affects someone, we encourage you to read her story.

“ More than two years ago I thought I was the happiest person I could ever be. My daughter and I lived together. I was close with my family, I had close friends. I was a very active person. Any person I met I could become friends with. I was involved in the community, I had worked very hard to become confident and happy with the person I was. And I was, I was happy.

I did not know what acquaintance rape was. I thought rape was only something that happened in large cities, far away from me. But since the night of the assault, my life has been nothing short of a psychological warfare with myself. Everything I do is a battle. I never knew living could be so hard and I never thought someone could make me hate myself so much for something I did not do, that I did not want. These feelings I am sharing with you today are things I have not shared with anyone, not even in counseling. If I tell people these things, I can't pretend to be strong, to be someone I am really not. But at this point, I feel like I have nothing left to lose.

I now suffer from a condition called Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. I can take over six different types of anti-anxiety pills. I have been maxed out on anti-depressants. I have spent days drinking to forget. When I sleep I am trapped in paralytic dreams screaming for only myself to hear. I have spent nights walking around my house with a gun checking door and window locks for hours on end. I have spent nights in a corner crying. I have contemplated how I could end my pain over and over again. There is a memory in my head, that plays again and again and I cannot get it to stop. I never knew that quiet could be so loud.

I have lost friends. I am distant from my family, I have lost so much time from my daughter. I dislike every person I meet. I am angry at them all. I am angry at me. I have no peace and very little happiness. My confidence is gone. Instead my head is filled with fear, shame, guilt, confusion, anger, and sadness. I wake up every morning and try to be normal, to laugh, to work, to go do things, to have conversations, to read books, watch movies, to go shopping, to go play at the park, but I get so angry. I get so tired. I feel so weak. I feel diseased.

I also feel disgust. Throughout this time, I have discovered that I am not the only survivor of this perpetrator. I am also not the last. I felt like coming forward to the police and justice system was the only way I would ever be able to help myself, to try to help others. I waited almost two years to face my fear in court. Instead I found a justice system that would allow me to openly be re-traumatized before my court date ever came and improperly make decisions that were the responsibility of a jury. I thought I would find a place of integrity but instead I was subjected to doubt and unheard of practices in a sexual assault case. I came to every court date, dying on the inside of pain and feeling only more humiliation as time went on by the justice system and by the looks and comments I could hear under a woman's breath. I NEVER agreed to support a plea bargain. I have only always told the truth, and I once was naive enough to believe that the justice system would prevail. Instead I was given a deal maker to represent the truth but in the end, the truth was compromised.

I am sorry that I have no physical wounds to show you, to prove that I am hurt, that I am different, scarred, angry, sad, a ghost of someone I once was. I am sorry I was never given the chance to tell what happened. I am sorry a deal was made. I am sorry there were other victims.

I have given you everything I have. I am at the bottom of my soul. It is absolutely devastating to know that every day I have to suffer, that I am some broken victim who is now just another number, another victim of a perpetrator and a victim of the court. The only solace I have is knowing that I tried to do the right thing, that maybe by me coming forward about this assault I would help another woman.

I am asking that the court please consider the emotional trauma, the absolute emptiness that is inside of me when making a decision today.

”

How to talk to children about abuse.

Empower yourself with talking points that protect.



For many parents, the idea of talking about abuse with their children feels uncomfortable or even frightening. Yet these conversations are among the most powerful tools adults have to keep kids safe. Silence creates confusion and vulnerability; knowledge builds confidence and trust. Crime Victims Resource Center (CVRC) works with children of all ages and we see the benefit that starting these conversations can have on children every day.

Start Early and Speak Often

Safety education should begin early, long before a child can even spell the word “abuse.” Young children can understand basic boundaries like “my body belongs to me” and “you can say no to unwanted touch.” As they grow, those lessons evolve into more nuanced conversations about consent, peer pressure, and healthy relationships.

The key is to make these discussions ongoing rather than a one-time lecture. Just as you would talk about seatbelts or crossing the street, normalize discussions about body safety in small, consistent doses. Children who grow up with this language feel empowered to speak up if something feels wrong.

Use Clear, Respectful Language

It’s common for adults to use vague terms like “private parts” or “down there,” but clear anatomical language is crucial. When children know the proper names for their body parts, they can describe concerns accurately and without shame. This not only helps parents understand what’s happening — it also signals to potential abusers that the child is informed and supported.

Avoid labeling conversations as “bad” or “dirty.” The goal is to build understanding, not fear. Encourage curiosity, answer questions calmly, and reassure children that it’s always safe to ask about anything that confuses them.

Create Safe Spaces for Disclosure

Children rarely come forward directly with the words “I’m being abused.” Instead, they might test the waters by hinting at discomfort or asking indirect questions. The adult’s reaction in that moment matters deeply. If you seem angry, scared, or dismissive, they may shut down. If you stay calm, listen, and thank them for trusting you, you reinforce their courage.

Let children know that no secret involving touch or discomfort should ever be kept. Reinforce the idea that adults should never ask a child to hide something from their parents or caregivers.

Normalize Empowerment, Not Fear

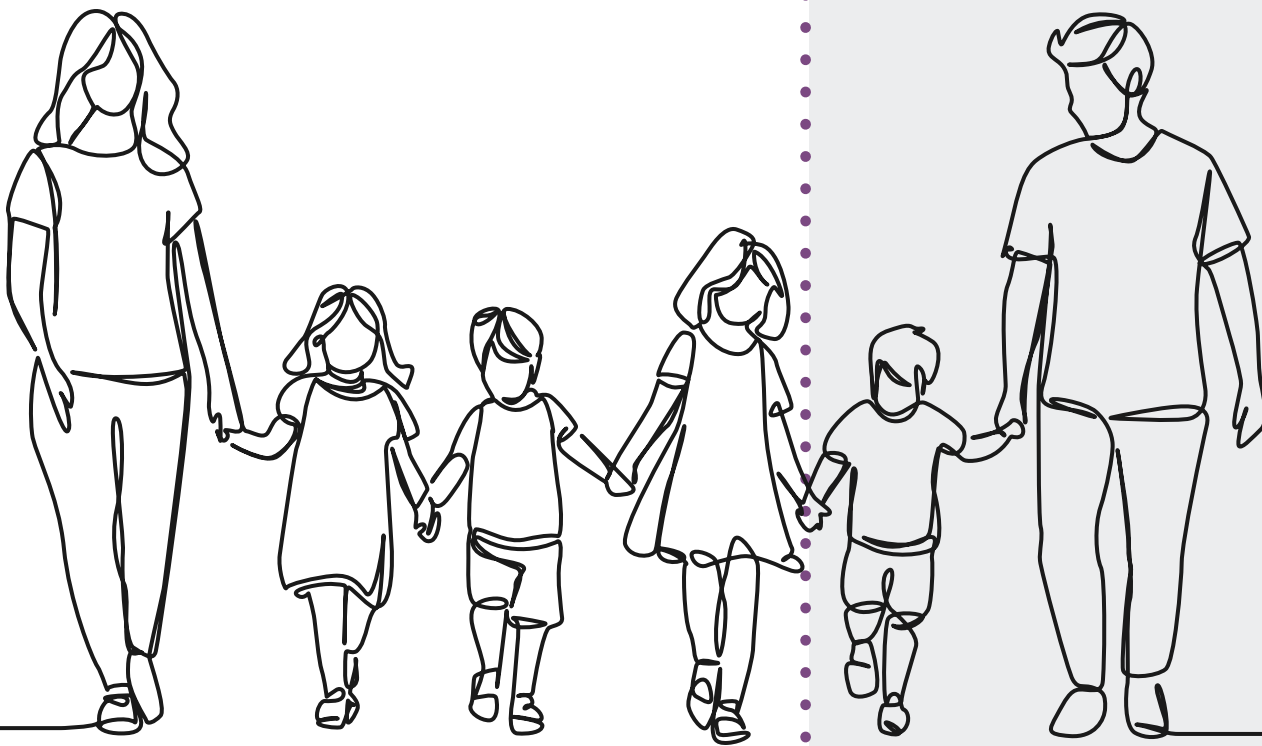
When we educate children about abuse, we aren’t scaring them — we’re equipping them. The message is one of strength: “You have a voice, and adults will listen.”

It can feel daunting to know where to start. The table below is a tool that breaks down what kinds of conversations are age appropriate. Children grow and develop rapidly, and every age brings different levels of understanding.

For more information on how to keep children safe, warning signs, and what to do if you think abuse is happening, please call

**Crime Victims
Resource Center
507-437-6680**

Age	Recommended Conversation Topic(s)
18 months-3 years	Teach your child which body parts are private (parts covered by a bathing suit). Also, teach your child the proper names of these parts (breasts, vagina, penis). Know the adults and children that spend time with your child. Make surprise visits to your child’s caregiver.
3-5 years	Teach your child about private parts of the body. Children may touch their genitals and be curious about the genitals of others. Many sexual behaviors may be normal in this age group, but if a child asks an adult to perform a sexual act or becomes forceful in his sexual behaviors, call your pediatrician for advice. Also give simple answers. When children ask questions about sex or the genitals, give simple and understandable answers so they know these topics are not “off limits.”
5-8 years	Teach your child to respect the private parts of others and to expect others to do the same. Talk about whom the child can tell if someone makes him/her feel uncomfortable when he/she is away from home. Listen when your child tries to tell you something, especially when it seems hard to talk about it. Make sure your child knows it’s OK to tell you about anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable, no matter who that person may be. Ask what your child would do in certain situations and how to recognize danger.
8-12 years	Stress personal safety. Your child should be aware of places where sexual abuse could happen, such as video arcades, malls, locker rooms, and out-of-the-way places outdoors. Talk about peer pressure. Make safety plans with your child so he/she knows what to do if he is asked to use drugs or alcohol, smoke, touch someone sexually, steal, cheat, or bully. Teach your child about sexual abuse. And if your child’s school has a sexual abuse program, discuss what he/she has learned.
12-18 years	Set aside time each week to talk about the good, bad, and confusing experiences your child has encountered.



His, Hers, and Ours

In the United States, approximately 40% of married couples with children are blended families. Blended/ Step families have always existed, but they have been more widely accepted over time. Historically this type of family dynamic was formed out of necessity such as the unexpected passing of a parent at a very young age. In recent years, it could be argued that blending families no longer derives from a place of necessity but a societal shift. In other words, divorce and having children outside of marriage have become more normalized.

The movie industry has long had its own portrayal of what they believed these families look like behind closed doors. You don't have to search far to find a movie portraying the role of an evil stepmom or abusive stepfather. Movies such as *Ever After*, *Parent Trap*, and *Cinderella* all painted a not so fairy tale picture of life in a step family. It begs the question, do children raised by a stepparent face a higher risk of experiencing child abuse and if so, why?

Children growing up with step families are **8 to 9 times more likely** to experience sexual abuse than those who are raised by both biological parents.

Prevalence of Abuse in Blended Families

Some of the research is conflicting when it comes to the risk of abuse children face growing up in a blended family as opposed to being raised with their biological family. In an attempt to search for additional statistics, it became evident that this is a topic that could use more research. Overall, there are several articles that reflect children in blended families face a much higher risk of being the victim of physical or sexual assault. One article noted that Canadian psychologists, Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, found that “children are 40 times more likely than those who live with biological parents to be sexually or physically abused” (Glenn W. A, 2019). Other researchers have been skeptical that the risk is truly this high.

According to the Children’s Assessment Center in Houston, children growing up with step families are 8 to 9 times more likely to experience sexual abuse than those who are raised by both biological parents.

Even more alarming, children living with a single mother and her live in partner are 20 times more likely to be sexually abused than those being raised by both biological parents.

Studies indicate the increased risk of verbal and physical abuse may be correlated to the following challenges blended families face:

- Blending of finances, navigating complex family roles, managing custody with the other biological parent, etc all lead to increased stress.
- Bringing unresolved issues from previous relationships into the new family.
- Stepparents may struggle with feeling unaccepted or disrespected leading to further conflict.
- Some children may come from a home where they were the only child for some time. These children may struggle with their biological parent splitting their time with a new spouse and their children.
- Planning family events may be even more complicated especially when trying to coordinate events around custody schedules.

Navigating Blended Family Dynamics

Anyone who has been in a long-term relationship with or without children is aware that relationships are **a lot** of work. Though step families may navigate different sets of challenges, the remedy to work through the hard times is much like any other relationship. Communicate with respect, have clear boundaries and expectations, and seek family therapy if there seems to be no resolution for ongoing issues.

Here are a few other ways to work through challenges that are more specific to blended families:

- Blending two families isn’t something that happens overnight. Don’t rush into it. Everyone will adjust to the new relationship at a different pace.
- Create clear boundaries. Discuss the role each stepparent will play in raising their respective children.
- Talk about different parenting styles and try to find common ground. If disagreements arise related to conflicting parenting styles, do not address these issues in front of the kids.
- Do not speak poorly about the other biological parents in the presence of children. Some may find this difficult, but the kids are the ones that will be most impacted by this in the end. Find someone to vent to, but it should never be the children.

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CVRC provided **8,037**
services to
712 VICTIMS

Crime Victims Resource Center

1000 First Drive NW, Austin · 507-437-6680

Empowering victims of crime through education, intervention, support and advocacy.

The Crime Victims Resource Center will help individuals who have been victims of many different types of crime. Some of the specific crimes we work with are:

- Accidents involving intoxicated driver
- Assault
- Burglary
- Child Abuse
- Domestic Abuse/Assault
- Elder Abuse
- Harassment
- Sexual Abuse/Assault
- Stalking
- Terroristic Threats
- Theft



Tori Miller
Director



Sasha Border
Victim Advocate



Coleena Snyder
Victim Advocate

Victim Support Services

- 24 hour crisis hotline
- Crisis counseling
- Safety planning
- Arranging emergency shelter
- Support groups
- Referrals to other agencies
- Emergency transportation
- Support during hospital examinations
- Support during police reporting
- Assistance with Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders
- Assistance with understanding the criminal justice system
- Accompaniment to court proceedings for support
- Updates on the progress of court proceedings
- Notification of victims' rights

Free and confidential service funded by The Hormel Foundation, Minnesota Department of Public Safety-Office of Justice Programs, and United Way of Mower County.