

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Child sexual abuse is often carefully planned. An abuser may spend weeks or months “grooming” a child for abuse through gift-giving and other special attention.**

### Where can I learn more?

One reason that child sexual abuse happens is that so many people do not want to talk about it or even think about it. Organizations that are trying to change this include:

- The Lincoln County Coalition Against Child Abuse and Advocacy Center: [www.cac-lincolncounty.org](http://www.cac-lincolncounty.org).
- The Darkness to Light Foundation: [www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org).
  - Prevent Child Abuse – North Carolina: [www.preventchildabusenc.org](http://www.preventchildabusenc.org).
  - The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (“RAINN”): [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).
  - Childhelp: [www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org).
  - Stop It Now!: [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org).
- The National Sexual Violence Resource Center: [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org).

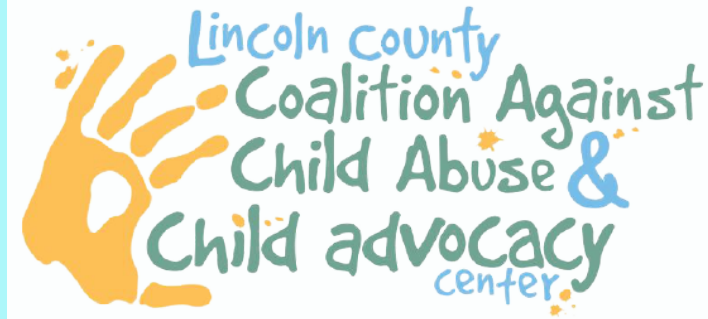
## DID YOU KNOW?

**An estimated 25%-30% of abusers will hurt more than 10 children over time, and 5%-10% will hurt more than 40 children.**

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[www.cac-lincolncounty.org](http://www.cac-lincolncounty.org)

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# MORE THINGS THAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

**...because it shouldn't  
hurt to be a child**

## How can I help schools, churches, clubs, and other organizations to be safer?

All adults who supervise children need to be aware of the danger of sexual abuse, and take steps to reduce the risk. It's important for organizations to:

- Carefully screen staff and volunteers before they are allowed to work with children. This should include criminal background checks, sex offender registry checks, interviews, and references.
- Hold all activities in groups if possible, ideally with more than one adult present.
- Make sure that all activities – whether in groups or in one-on-one situations – can be easily seen and interrupted by others.
- Have training and policies to make sure that staff and volunteers know how to spot possible child abuse, and what to do if they suspect it.

## What happens when someone reports suspected child abuse?

An investigation is conducted by law enforcement, the county Department of Social Services, or maybe both. This includes:

- Interviews with the child, parents, the suspected abuser, and other children in the home.
- Checking records for previous offenses, and for other reports about the suspected abuser.
- Making sure that the identity of the person who made the report stays confidential.
- Making sure that the person who made the report will not be prosecuted. North Carolina law requires all adults to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Failing to report suspected abuse is a crime, and people get in serious trouble because of it.

## What are some signs of possible sexual abuse?

Few sexually abused children have obvious physical signs, but they may have behavioral signs. Possible physical and behavioral signs include:

- Redness, rashes, pain, swelling, bruises, or other recurring problems on or near the genitals or anus.
  - Frequent urinary tract infections.
- Unexplained fear or hesitancy about spending time with a particular person, or going to a particular place, especially if the child will be left there.
- Compulsive, repetitive, or unusual behaviors associated with the child's genitals.
- Behavior that suggests the child has been exposed to pornography, or to adult sexual behavior or conversation.
  - Withdrawal, depression, persistent anxiety or anger, low self-esteem, or sudden and unexplained changes in personality or behavior.

## What should I do if a child tells me that he or she is being abused?

It takes a lot of courage for a child to tell an adult about abuse, even if the adult is a parent or other trusted person. When it happens, the adult should:

- Listen calmly and patiently, without showing shock, panic, or anger. Show only concern for the child.
- Encourage the child to talk by using expressions like “tell me more” and “what happened then?”

- Assure the child that you believe them, and that they are not to blame for the abuse, and that you will help.
- Don't ask detailed or leading questions. Be careful not to “contaminate” the child's memory of events.
- After the conversation is over, write down everything the child said, then call the county Department of Social Services, the police, or the sheriff.

## Who should I call to report possible abuse?

It is best to call the county Department of Social Services (“DSS”), the police, or the sheriff. In North Carolina, every DSS office has a social worker available 24 hours each day.

You can find the phone number for your county's DSS office at [www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/), or by calling 919-527-6335.

- You might not be sure that abuse is happening, but you do not need proof of abuse to make a report in good faith. All you need is a reasonable suspicion.
- If abuse is occurring, your report will not only help the child you are concerned about, but others who may be being hurt by the same abuser, or who may be hurt in the future.
- If the suspected abuser is an older or larger child or adolescent, they might be abuse victims themselves. An estimated 40% of sexually abused children are abused by older or larger children or youth.

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