PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

WHAT IS IT?
Child sexual abuse is a significant but preventable adverse childhood experience and public health problem. Child sexual abuse refers to the involvement of a child (person under the age of 18) in sexual activity that violates the laws or social taboos of society and that he/she:

- does not fully comprehend
- does not consent to or is unable to give informed consent to, or
- is not developmentally prepared for and cannot give consent to

HOW BIG OF AN ISSUE?
Child sexual abuse is a significant but preventable public health problem. Many children wait to report or never report child sexual abuse. Studies show:

- About 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience child sexual abuse at some point in their childhood.
- 91% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or child’s family knows.

The total lifetime economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States in 2015 was estimated to be at least $9.3 billion. Although this is likely an underestimate of the true impact of the problem since child sexual abuse is underreported

- Females exposed to child sexual abuse are at 2-13 times increased risk of sexual victimization in adulthood
- Individuals who experienced child sexual abuse are at twice the risk for non-sexual intimate partner violence
## What are the consequences?

Experiencing child sexual abuse is an **adverse childhood experience (ACE)** that can affect how a person thinks, acts, and feels over a lifetime, resulting in short- and long-term physical and mental/emotional health consequences.

**Examples of physical health consequences include:**

- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- physical injuries
- chronic conditions later in life, such as heart disease, obesity, and cancer

**Examples of mental health consequences include:**

- depression
- posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms

**Examples of behavioral consequences include:**

- substance use/misuse including opioid misuse
- risky sexual behaviors, meaning behaviors that could result in pregnancy or STIs such as not using condoms or other contraceptives, or sex with multiple partners
- increased risk for suicide or suicide attempts

*Resource: CDC*