



Preventing Child Abuse in Youth Sports Parents' Resources

There are many organizations across the country focused on preventing child sexual abuse. The following suggestions come from Darkness to Light (<http://www.d2l.org>), Stop It Now! (www.stopitnow.org), and Kidpower (www.kidpower.org).

Learn the Facts

- > “Realities, not trust, should influence your decisions regarding children.” (www.d2l.org)
- > Experts estimate that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before their 18th birthday.
- > The median age for reported sexual abuse is 9 years old.
- > As many as 60% of children are abused by people the family trusts.
- > People who abuse children look and act just like everyone else. In fact, they often go out of their way to appear trustworthy to gain access to children.

Lobby for Policies

- > “Think carefully about the safety of any one-adult/one-child situations. Choose group situations when possible.” (www.d2l.org)
- > One-on-one relationships with adults can be incredibly enriching, and there are ways to increase the safety of these situations without eliminating them from children's lives altogether.
- > Insist on screenings that include criminal background checks, personal interviews, and professional recommendations for all adults who serve children.
- > Insist that the organizations your child is involved with train their staff and volunteers to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.
- > Ensure that youth-serving organizations have policies for dealing with suspicious situations and reports of abuse.
- > Visit <http://www.stopitnow.org/9questions> for nine questions every parent should ask.

Empower yourself and your kids with skills to stay safe!

- > “We can teach our children Road Safety without talking about exactly what happens when you get hit by a car. We can teach Water Safety without going into detail about what it means to drown. And we can teach People Safety skills without describing the terrible things people sometimes do to children.” (www.kidpower.org)
- > Teach and role-play skills that your child can use to stay safe from sexual abuse. Visit <http://www.kidpower.org/resources/articles/safety-tips-sexual-abuse.html> and <http://www.kidpower.org/child-abuse.html> for details.
- > Talk with your child when he or she returns from a practice or game. Notice the child's mood and whether the child can tell you with confidence how the time was spent.
- > Find a way to tell the adults who spend time with your children that you and the child are educated about child sexual abuse. Be that direct.

Make a Plan and Act on Suspicions

- > “Learn where to go, whom to call and how to react. Your reactions have a powerful influence on vulnerable children.” (www.d2l.org)
- > Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common. Emotional or behavioral signals are more common.
- > Very few reported incidents of sexual abuse are false.
- > You may be faced with a situation where you suspect abuse but don't have any proof. Suspicions are scary, but trust your instincts. Have the courage to report the suspected abuse. Report all cases, both inside and outside your family.

Resources for Parents

- > If you're unsure about whether to make an official report or just need support, contact a children's advocacy center. The staff will help you evaluate your suspicions and your next steps. Contact The National Children's Alliance at www.nca-online.org or call 1-800-239-9950.
- > All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Some states require that anyone with suspicions report it. Visit www.childwelfare.gov for more information.
- > Take the Kidpower Skill-A-Day Challenge (<http://www.kidpower.org/blog/category/skill-a-day-english/>). It provides 30 simple, easily practiced skills that can protect kids from bullying, abuse and other violence.