

- Bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed, or other sleep disturbances
- Acting out inappropriate sexual activity or showing an unusual interest in sexual matters or sexual knowledge beyond their years
- A sudden acting out of feelings or aggressive or rebellious behavior
- Regression to infantile behavior; clinging
- School or behavior problems
- Changes in toilet-training habits
- A fear of certain places, people, or activities; an excessive fear of going to the daycare center; and an avoidance or unwillingness to discuss their time at the daycare center
- Bruises, rashes, cuts, limping, multiple or poorly explained injuries
- Pain, itching, bleeding, fluid, or rawness in the private areas

What to Do

If your child discloses acts of sexual exploitation or physical abuse, we want you to be prepared to help.

Try not to overreact or show alarm or anger in front of your child. **Do not** criticize or blame your child. Reassure and strongly support your child's decision to tell.

- Do not return your child to the daycare center until you are convinced it is safe to do so.
- Immediately alert the police, sheriff's office, or other law-enforcement agency.

- Immediately alert the child protection, youth services, child abuse, or other appropriate social-service organizations.
- Seek out medical attention for your child. Call your doctor, or go to a clinic or hospital.
- Discuss the need for counseling or therapy for your child with a qualified doctor, social worker, law-enforcement representative, or member of the clergy.
- Take appropriate steps, under the advice of child-care professionals and law enforcement, to have other families using the daycare center alerted.
- Do not discuss this with the daycare director yourself; rely on the appropriate social-service and licensing agencies.
- If you are unsure about whether your child has experienced sexual exploitation or physical abuse, consult with a doctor, social worker, or law-enforcement representative.

The support and cooperation of the victim's family is invaluable to the effective resolution of cases involving the sexual exploitation of children. Be open and available to the investigators and prosecutors handling your child's case. If there is media involvement in your case, help ensure your child's name and picture, your name and picture, and other private information remain confidential. Also seek assistance from any available resources such as a victim-witness program through your county prosecutor's office.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC), established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit organization, serves as a clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children; provides technical assistance to the public and law-enforcement agencies; offers training programs to law-enforcement and social-service professionals; distributes photographs of and descriptions about missing children worldwide; creates and coordinates child-protection education and prevention programs and publications; coordinates child-protection efforts with the private sector; networks with nonprofit service providers and state clearinghouses regarding missing-child cases; and provides information about effective legislation to help ensure the protection of children per 42 U.S.C. §§ 5771 *et seq.*; 42 U.S.C. § 11606; and 22 C.F.R. § 94.6.

A 24-hour, toll-free telephone line, **1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**, is available in Canada and the United States for those who have information regarding missing and exploited children. The "phone free" number is 001-800-843-5678 when dialing from Mexico and 00-800-0843-5678 when dialing from many other countries. For a list of other toll-free numbers available when dialing from specific countries visit www.missingkids.com, and from the homepage click on the link to "More Services" and then on the link to "24-Hour Hotline." The CyberTipline® is available worldwide for online reporting of these crimes at www.cybertipline.com. The TTY

line is 1-800-826-7653. The NCMEC business number when dialing from other countries is 001-703-522-9320. The NCMEC facsimile number is 703-274-2200. The NCMEC web-site address is www.missingkids.com.

For information regarding the services offered by our other NCMEC offices, please call them directly in California at 714-508-0150, Florida at 561-848-1900, Kansas City at 913-469-5437, New York at 585-242-0900, and South Carolina at 803-254-2326.

A number of publications, addressing various aspects of the missing- and exploited-child issue, are available free-of-charge in single copies by contacting the



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Just in case...

Guidelines in case you are considering daycare

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(1-800-843-5678)**

www.missingkids.com



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs ♦ U.S. Department of Justice

Guidelines in case you are considering daycare

Those who pay careful attention to choosing quality daycare can provide an ideal environment for their children during the day—one with challenging educational opportunities where young children play creatively and socialize with each other.

Because families want the best possible care for their children while in daycare, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children has developed this brochure to help families find quality daycare providers, arm their children with safety tips, identify the warning signs of sexual exploitation and physical abuse, and learn what to do if these problems are suspected or disclosed.

It is critical for families to understand most sexual exploitation is not committed by the stereotypical “dirty old man” who drifts into town and lures children to a lair under the bridge. These acts are committed by persons who are known to the children, have often gained the children’s trust and affection, and may threaten or bribe the children into silence. As such daycare exploiters are both male and female.

Finding Quality Daycare Providers

Excellent sources of information about quality daycare providers are the recommendations of family, friends, and neighbors. Lists of licensed daycare providers may also be available from the local department of social services, county daycare licensing offices, local schools, and community-resource centers. As in any situation in which your children are interacting

with adults you do not know well, your children may still be at risk regardless of whether the daycare center is small or large, high-priced or inexpensive, public or private, in the inner city or out in the country.

Visit prospective daycare centers, take a tour, and interview the daycare staff while personally observing their interaction with your children and the other children. Look for mature and responsible people who listen and respond well to your children and appear relaxed and happy with them. Also arrange to meet with other individuals who may have contact with your child such as bus drivers, janitors, and relatives of the daycare personnel. Visit unannounced. When you have a list of possible daycare centers, carefully check their references. Contact local law enforcement, county licensing agencies, and the department of social services to determine if any reports have been made about the daycare provider. Check state sex-offender registries, which are generally accessible through your state law-enforcement agency.

While not a guarantee against acts of sexual exploitation being committed, it is a good idea to select a licensed facility that conducts criminal-history-background checks on its employees and volunteers. When you have chosen a daycare provider, the best way to get to know the staff and observe their behavior firsthand is to involve yourself in some way in the activities of the center by volunteering to assist on field trips or for special events.

Below is a list of specific recommendations to help you choose a safe and secure daycare center and reduce the risks to children in daycare.

- Make sure the daycare center is designed so parents and guardians are fully free to come and go with no requirements to call first and no off-limit areas. Exploitation is less likely to occur in facilities in which parents and guardians have unlimited access.
- Make sure the bathrooms do not contain areas where children may be isolated. Ask who is allowed to take children to the bathroom, for what purposes, and at what times. Review the physical layout of the bathroom. Are the doors designed to allow for privacy for the children and supervision of adults? For instance daycare centers should consider installing items such as half-doors or doors with the upper half glass to allow adults to supervise the children, while still providing privacy to the children.
- Make sure there is proper supervision of the children during naps. Children may be more at risk during naptime because other children are sleeping, the room is darkened, and other staff members may be out of the room.
- Ask about the extent of education and training of **all** daycare personnel interacting with your children, including volunteers and aides, and determine if they were screened for any criminal history in sexual exploitation or physical assault against children, emotional instability, or substance abuse. Find out if anyone is allowed solitary access to the children without supervision.
- Find out who will be interacting with your children in addition to the daycare provider and staff members, because exploitation

associated with daycare centers can occur at the hands of individuals not directly involved in the teaching or child-care responsibilities such as bus drivers, janitors, and relatives of the daycare-center providers. Make sure your child’s contact with such persons is limited, and closely question your child about them.

- Find out what the staff-to-child ratio is, and make certain it is in compliance with county and state licensing standards. When you visit unannounced, make sure the approved ratio of staff members to children is being met.
- Discuss in-depth with the daycare provider how the discipline of children is handled, who administers it, under what circumstances it is used, and what form it takes. Make sure to talk to your children each day about what happens at the daycare center. Pay close attention to any punishments used and the circumstances under which they were used. Also ask about incidents that may have made your children feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. States can strictly prohibit any form of physical discipline and limit the other types of disciplinary measures that may be used. Children should never be humiliated or frightened as a form of discipline nor should discipline be severe.

Safety Tips for Children in Daycare

The most important key to child safety is effective communication with your child. Listening to your children and making them feel loved and

needed will help reduce their risk of being sexually exploited. The first step you should take is to establish an atmosphere in the home in which your child feels comfortable talking about sensitive matters and embarrassing situations. The simple truth is children are often reluctant to talk about their traumatic experiences—afraid they will be ignored, misunderstood, or blamed for what happened. Carefully listen to your children, and be alert to any changes in their behavior or reluctance to be with certain individuals. Remember your children may not be able to come out and tell you what happened to them, but they may give you cues and clues instead. If a child expresses dislike for a certain person or reluctance to go to the daycare center, it may indicate a more serious situation, and you should gently question your child to determine the cause for his or her distress.

Below are specific instructions to share with your children to help prevent sexual exploitation.

- You have the right to say **no** to anyone who asks you to do anything painful, embarrassing, or wrong. No matter what those persons may say, your family would never allow you to be hurt or made uncomfortable.
- No one should touch you in the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit, nor should you touch anyone else—adult or child—in those places. Your body is special and private.
- When you are in the bathroom, no one should touch you in a way to make you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused or spend too much time watching you or fixing your clothes. You should **never** be asked to handle bodily wastes or blood in any way.

- Do not remain alone with an adult in an isolated place—a bathroom, an office, a bedroom, a closet. Be especially careful at naptime when the other children are asleep.
- Do not let anyone trick you by threatening you or bribing you with gifts or candy.
- There are no wizards or witches with magical powers at the daycare center. No matter what anyone may tell you, no one has the power to harm you, your pets, or your family in that way.
- Do not let anyone take your picture in a way that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. If anyone takes your picture for any reason, be sure to tell your family.
- You can be strong, and you have the right to say **no** to anyone who tries to take you away from the daycare center; touches you; or makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused in any way.

Detecting Sexual Exploitation

Families bear the chief responsibility in identifying and reporting sexual exploitation. The reality of sexual exploitation is children often feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused and may be unwilling to talk about the experience. But **they will talk** if you have already established an atmosphere of trust and support in your home in which your children will feel free to talk without fear of accusation, blame, or guilt.

Families should be alert to the indicators of sexual exploitation and physical abuse noted below.

- Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearfulness, and excessive crying