

## **A guide for Parents to Keep Their Children Safe**

### ***Teach your child these personal safety rules:***

- The difference between safe/good touches and unsafe/bad touches, what is appropriate physical affection.
- The proper names for their private parts; many children are not able to tell about the abuse because they do not know the words to use.
- Safety rules apply to all adults, not just strangers.
- Their bodies belong to them and it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts. Private parts are those areas of the body covered by shirts and shorts.
- It is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable; no matter whom that person is.
- They should *not* keep secrets about touching, no matter what the person says; if someone touches them, tell and keep telling until someone listens.

IN YOUR CONVERSATION, YOU MAY WANT TO GO OVER GENERAL SAFETY ISSUES LIKE FIRE SAFETY, BIKE SAFETY, OR TRAFFIC SAFETY.

ROLE-PLAY THE ABOVE RULES SEVERAL TIMES. DO NOT EXPECT YOUR CHILD TO MEMORIZE THEM.

### ***What Parents Should Know:***

- Every child is vulnerable regardless of cultural background or economic level.
- Children need to feel loved, valued, and protected.
- Children are best protected by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for their safety and well being.
- Often there are not physical signs for emotional or sexual abuse.
- Many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.
- The offender may have threatened to hurt a family member, or the child feels that he or she is to blame for the abuse.
- It is important to show interest in your child's activities; let him/her know that you are available to talk or listen; allow your child to share thoughts and feelings with you.
- It is important to identify several trusted adults that he or she can go to and tell what has happened.
- The child is never to blame for abuse; children cannot prevent abuse, only the offender can.
- Studies suggest that personal safety rules can be taught and understood by children 3 and up.
- While there have been cases where children have made false allegations, it is more common for a child to deny that the abuse has happened.

### ***Ways to Support Your Child if He/She has been Abused:***

- Believe your child.
- Reassure your child that his or her safety is important.
- Assure your child that he or she is not to blame for the abuse.
- Remember that how you respond to your child is critical to his or her ability to deal with the trauma or abuse.
- Get your child medical help.
- Get support for yourself; this is a very difficult issue for many parents to handle.
- Call your local sexual assault crisis center for assistance for your child and yourself.