

for qualified individuals from the other professionals who are helping you. If finding a counselor on your own becomes difficult, contact NCMEC's Family Advocacy Division (FAD). FAD works proactively with families, law enforcement, social-service agencies, and other family-advocacy organizations to assist families in crisis. FAD staff members are ready to assist and help you locate resources for your family. They will work to find a counselor with the right amount of experience in this issue. The Family Advocacy Division may be reached at 1-877-446-2632 extension 6304.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) was established in 1984 as a private, nonprofit organization. Per 42 U.S.C. § 5773 and other federal legislation NCMEC fulfills 20 core federal mandates including the operation of a national, 24-hour, toll-free telephone line by which individuals may report information regarding the location of a missing child and request information about the procedures necessary to reunite a child with his or her legal custodian; operation of the national resource center and information clearinghouse for missing and sexually exploited children; coordination of programs to locate, recover, or reunite missing children with their families; provision of technical assistance and training in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and sexually exploited children; and operation of a CyberTipline® for reporting Internet-related, child sexual exploitation.

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 sexually 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 home page respectively click on the “More Services” and “24-Hour Hotline” links. The CyberTipline is available worldwide for online reporting of these crimes at www.cybertipline.com. The TTY line is 1-800-826-7653.

For information about the services offered by NCMEC's other offices, please call them directly in California at 714-508-0150, Florida at 561-848-1900, Florida/Collier County at 239-566-5801, Kansas City at 913-469-5437, New York/Buffalo at 716-842-6333, New York/Mohawk Valley at 315-732-7233, New York/Rochester at 585-242-0900, South Carolina at 803-254-2326, and Texas at 512-465-2156.

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



Charles B. Wang International Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3175
U.S.A.

Copyright © 1985, 2005, and 2009 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. All rights reserved. This project was supported by Grant No. 2009-MC-CX-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®, 1-800-THE-LOST®, and CyberTipline® are registered service marks of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Printed on recycled paper. NCMEC Order #20.

Just in case...

Guidelines in case your child might someday be the victim of sexual exploitation



Copyright © Barbara D. Cummings, 1986, from the *Los Angeles Times*.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®

1-800-THE-LOST®
(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 your child might someday be the victim of sexual exploitation

The instructions in this brochure provide information for your family about what to do if your child indicates he or she has been the victim of sexual exploitation. They are calm, straightforward instructions not meant to alarm or frighten your child. **Families and children should be careful and aware — not afraid.**

There is always a chance a child may disclose past acts of exploitation or general feelings of fear. If this happens in your family, be prepared to help your child. How you react to your child's disclosure of sexual exploitation or fear is an important part of child protection. Follow the guidelines noted below if your child indicates he or she may have been victimized in this way.

Don't

■ **Over-question your child or demand details.**

Social-service and law-enforcement personnel will need to gather information during a subsequent interview with the child. Leave the search for details of the exploitation to them. They are trained to sort through details and gather critical information. Families need to listen and offer support.

■ **Underreact to or minimize the information.**

Pay attention to what is being said and trust your child's feelings and emotions. Disclosing information is not easy for anyone, especially for a child.

■ **Panic or overreact to the information disclosed by your child.**

With your help and support, you will both make it through these difficult times. Be careful of your facial expressions, as your child will be watching to see your reaction.

■ **Criticize or blame your child.**

One of the worst things you could do is express anger at your child for having violated previous instructions. Outbursts such as, "I told you

not to go into anyone's home!" will only hurt your ability to help.

Do

■ **Respect your child's privacy.** Accompany your child to a private, comfortable place where he or she may relate the incident(s). Be careful not to discuss the victimization in front of people who do not need to know what happened.

■ **Support your child and the decision to tell.** It is normal for children to fear telling others — especially parents or guardians. Make it clear that telling you what happened was the right thing to do and you will listen and get help. Reassure your children you'll always love them, no matter what has happened. Remember, children are often told — by a child molester or exploiter — bad things will happen if they tell what has occurred. Children are especially fearful of punishment, panic, or the loss of a parent's or guardian's love. Your initial reaction to the disclosure will determine whether or not your child will feel comfortable in telling you additional information.

■ **Show physical affection, and express your love and confidence with words and gestures.** Avoid challenges starting with **why** such as, "Why didn't you tell me this before?" or "Why did you let it happen?" **Give positive messages** such as, "I'm proud of you for telling me this," "I'm glad you're OK," or "I know it wasn't your fault."

■ **Explain to your child that he or she has done nothing wrong.** Your child may have feelings of guilt and responsibility and assume he or she is to blame for what happened. Most children are enticed or tricked into being victimized, and they think they should have been smarter or stronger.

■ **Remember children seldom lie about acts of sexual victimization.** It is important your child feels you believe what he or she has told you.

■ **Keep the lines of communication open with your child.** In the future it will be vitally important for your child to believe you are empathetic, understanding, supportive, and optimistic so he or she will feel comfortable in making additional disclosures and discussing feelings.

Steps to Take

■ If you think your child has been physically injured, seek appropriate medical attention. Remember, often we do not realize a child who has been sexually exploited may also be physically injured. Do not guess. Let the professionals make an independent judgment about treatment.

■ You must alert the child-protection, youth-services, child-abuse, or other appropriate social-service organizations. The police, sheriff's office, or other law-enforcement agency **must also** be notified. Many jurisdictions have established child-advocacy centers providing all of these services under one roof in a child-friendly environment. And because children should not have to repeat information about their victimization over and over again, some jurisdictions have established limits to the number of interviews a child is required to give. Many have also installed videotaping to limit the number of people who need to discuss the victimization with your child.

■ Consider the need for counseling or therapy for your child. To act as if it did not happen is not going to help your child address the victimization. In deciding what counselor to use, look for someone who is experienced in cases of sexual victimization. Seek referrals