



**"If ever there is a tomorrow when we're not together...there is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart...I'll always be with you."**

**-Christopher Robin**

## When a Child Suffers Abuse:

### What to Expect & How We Can Help

Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline: ( 844) SAVEACHILD or 1-800-482-5964

#### Please Note:

All information collected by Grandma's House is protected by law, and will not be available at any time to outside parties.

Grandma's House Children's Advocacy Center & staff will not participate in custody or civil disputes , and information gathered by Grandma's House will be unavailable for these purposes.

If you need any of the information from the investigation, it can be requested using the information found on the Caretaker's Guide, provided in your Parent Pack.

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcf/DCFSpublications/PUB-052.pdf>

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**Dear Parent/ Guardian:**

The purpose of this packet is to provide you with information about Grandma’s House Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) and some services that we provide.

The CAC is a nonprofit organization that provides a coordinated, multi-agency approach to the investigation, intervention, and treatment of child sexual and physical abuse. The CAC is a place where children who are victims of abuse and their families can obtain support while dealing with their feelings and emotions about the abuse and the investigative process that lies ahead.

What you can expect during your visit to the CAC

- ♥ A trained professional will speak to your child regarding the abuse that they may have endured- it will be recorded to prevent your child from having to talk multiple times to several different individuals, therefore preventing further trauma to your child during the investigation process.
- ♥ We provide medical referrals to SANE (Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner) – trained RN’s who are specially trained in the ability to examine children who have been the victims of abuse.
- ♥ We also provide referrals to mental health services (counseling) at no charge to you. This service is also available to each member of your family.
- ♥ A Child and Family Advocate will then follow up with you throughout the investigation process in case you are in need of any more information or services.

Together, our organization works with other agencies as a coordinated, state – mandated, multi-disciplinary team in order to provide your family with maximum support.

Enclosed in this packet you will find:

- ♥ General information and parent tips
- ♥ How parents sometimes feel when abuse has been reported
- ♥ What happens next?
- ♥ Your team of child abuse professionals
- ♥ How to help children with their feelings
- ♥ Some things we should never do with children
- ♥ Why mental health therapy for your child is important
- ♥ Basic information about the legal process
- ♥ Books for kids
- ♥ My phone resource list

We appreciate the support you are providing for your child/ children. We are here to help you. So feel free to give us a call if you have any questions or need anything at all. You may also find more information on our website [www.grandmashousecac.com](http://www.grandmashousecac.com)

Sincerely,

Grandma's House Children's Advocacy Center



## What Your Family May Experience

Possible sexual abuse of a child is very disturbing. Finding out about abuse that happened to your child may be as difficult on you as it is the child. There are some things that you can do to help.

- ♥ Do not blame yourself and try to remain calm in the presence of your child.
- ♥ Believe your child. Let your child know that he or she did the right thing in telling about the abuse.
- ♥ Tell your child that the abuse is not his/ her fault. Keep saying it and mean it.
- ♥ Even if your child appears to be functioning the same and seems okay, get counseling. Not only for your child, but for you and other members of your family affected by the abuse.
- ♥ Let the child talk about the abuse he/ she wants to but do not make the child talk and do not ask questions concerning the abuse. Listen to your child if he/she wants to discuss the abuse with you and if she/he comes to you with concerns.
- ♥ Respect your child's fears and anxieties. Let your child know that you are trying to make sure she/he is safe.
- ♥ Treating your child normally helps him or her feel normal. Continue your regular rules or routines as much as possible.
- ♥ Do not discuss the situation with others in the presence of your child.

Child sexual abuse is the responsibility of the molester. Victims and their families need to know that no matter what happened, it was not their fault. The closer the relationship is with the offender the harder it is for the victim to tell- and the more likely the child is going to blame him or herself.

Sexual abuse robs children of their childhood by forcing them to meet the sexual and emotional needs of adults. Abuse may cause children to become depressed or withdrawn, or to act aggressively or sexually. They may regress socially or developmentally. They may develop sleep or eating disorders, become extremely anxious and fearful, develop problems at school, or an older child may begin using drugs or alcohol as a way of numbing the pain. They may act out sexually with other children or they may develop no outward symptoms at all, because of their energies are directed toward making their families look okay to outsiders.

Grandma's House Children's Advocacy Center offers a safe, confidential site for investigative interviews that can be videotaped. This videotaping prevents frequent retelling of the abuse, reducing both the trauma of disclosure for the child and the possibility that she/ he will alter retract the allegation.

The Center also provides a medical examination room with state of the art equipment which magnifies any physical indicators of trauma.

The primary objectives of the physical examinations are to look for physical findings that may be consistent with sexual abuse, reassure the parents regarding absence of significant physical injury and to detect signs of sexually transmitted diseases. The examination is normal in about 80% of sexually abused children. Most other findings are consistent with suspicion of abuse, but not diagnostic of it. A normal exam does not necessarily mean that abuse has not happened.

Remember: You are not alone. We are here to help and answer questions whenever you need us. 870-391-2224.



### **How Parents Sometimes Feel When Abuse Has Been Reported**

When abuse is reported, parents sometimes feel as if they are on a roller coaster of emotions. This is normal. The report can affect your life in many ways, and it takes time to adjust. Following are some of the common thoughts and feelings parents have. You may feel one or more of these, or you may move from one to another.

Denial. Your first reaction may be to not believe or accept the possibility that it really happened. Or you may believe it happened, but that no real harm was done. Parents often experience denial because it is too overwhelming to accept that the abuse occurred and that there will be after-effects. For some people, it takes time to overcome denial and face the realities of abuse.

Anger. At times, you may feel angry at yourself for not protecting the child. You may feel angry at the perpetrator for what he did. You may even feel angry at the child. Be honest about your feelings and share them with a trusted person or group.

Helpless. You probably do not know what to expect and feel that things are out of your control. Some parents may fear that their children will be taken away. Try to stay aware of how cases proceed through the system in which you are involved. The Children's Advocacy Center Advocate can help you remain apprised of the case.

Lack of Assertiveness. You may feel invisible and think there is nothing you can do to help the situation get better. We will help you learn what you can do to change the situation and take appropriate action.

Shock, Numbness, Repulsion. You may have memories of being abused as a child, which may lead to shock, numbness and repulsion for the new situation you find yourself in. If so, you may need to seek therapy for yourself to recover from the abuse. Included in the parent packet you received while at CAC is a listing of local therapist who have experience in this area.

Guilt, Self-Blame. You may feel it is all your fault. But the offender is responsible for the abuse, not you. The best thing you can do now is support your child and learn all you can about how to make things better. Reading this handout is a good first step.

Hurt and Betrayal. It is normal to feel hurt from the loss of your child's innocence. You also may have lost a spouse or partner if that person was the offender. You may even have lost friends. It is very important to take time to grieve for these losses.

Sexual Inadequacy. Some women believe the offender turned to the child because their relations with him were not adequate. It is important to learn the dynamics of abuse in order to realize that sexual relations with an adult partner do not affect a person's likelihood to abuse or not abuse children.

Concerns About Money. You may be worried about finances because of lost income. There are state programs that may be able to help you. Don't be afraid to talk to the CAC Advocate assigned about what may be available in this area.

Fear of Violence. In homes where violence is common, you may fear the offender will try to harm your children. If so, there are at least three shelters in Northwest Arkansas with professionals who can help you. Please let this possibility be known and we can assist you in contacting the shelter of your choice.

Fear of Drug or Alcohol Abuse. You may be afraid that you or the offender will abuse drugs or alcohol because of the stress, or that one of you may have a relapse to an old addiction. If you need help, don't hesitate to find a recovery center or talk to your Advocate concerning this fear.

As always the CAC Advocates are here for your children and you and we care about the family unit. You are encouraged to call us anytime. 870-391-2224

## What Happens Next?

Here at the Children's Advocacy Center We often hear, "what happens next?" Although each child, family and investigation is different, there are common factors. Hopefully this will help you understand the investigation process better. If at any time you have any questions please feel free to call us. If we do not know the answers we are willing to help you find the answers.

- First, most reports of possible sexual abuse are investigated by a professional who are employed with the Arkansas State Police Crimes Against Children Division (ASP/CACD), or The Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services (DHS/DCFS). The investigators who interview the child victims are not commissioned officers. They are professionally trained in the area of detecting possible child abuse, investigating alleged abuse, and interviewing children.
- Although the Advocates at the Children's Advocacy Center work closely with the ASP/ CACD investigators, they are two separate agencies who work toward helping families in crisis or need due to possible sexual abuse.



Okay, now that we have explained the role of each agency listed, below is a possible time line and what you might expect in the investigation process.

- From the time the alleged child abuse was reported, the investigator will contact the victim and the non-offending parent within a 24 hour time period.
- The investigator, by law, has 45 days to complete the investigation from the time the report was called into the child abuse hot line. Please remember that this is just a possible time frame. The investigation may not take the whole 45 days to complete. There have been some cases which have taken longer than 45 days. This usually only happens if there are extenuating circumstances and the investigator has files an extension.
- Some cases may involve City or County Law Enforcement Officers. So do not be surprised is a detective contacts you. ASP/ CACD and the Detective will work together on the case.
- After a thorough look at the facts, possible collection of evidence and interview with possible witnesses, the victim, and the alleged offender the investigator will make a determination concerning the allegation that was reported to the child abuse hot line. A report that was determined to be Unfounded/ Unsubstantiated means that there was not enough evidence to support the claim or allegation made. A report that was determined to be Found/ Substantiated or True basically means that there was a preponderance (51%) of evidence of the allegation made. Circumstances may also require the Department of Human Services to become involved in your child's case. This does not mean that you are a bad parent or that you have done anything wrong. It is just to ensure that you have all of the services available to you and your child.
- When a determination has been made, the investigator forwards the complete file to the main ASP/ CACD office in Little Rock and they forward documentation to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. It is the Prosecuting Attorney's Office who determines if any legal action at this point or criminal charge(s) are going to be pursued.

If at any time please remember you are welcome to call the Advocate assigned at the Children's Advocacy Center. We are here for you and your child and no question is trivial. Our phone number is (870) 391-2224.

## **Your Team of Professionals:**

### **Who Are They?**

Grandma's House Children's Advocacy Center is fortunate to work with a highly trained team of professionals which meet to respond to child abuse reports. The roles of team members are described below.

**The Prosecuting Attorney:** The prosecuting Attorney will lead the team and has the final decision as to whether charges will be filed. Many factors will be considered which will affect the success of the case in court. Some of the factors considered are: age and maturity of the child and the child's ability to testify, whether or not the suspect has confessed, presence of medical evidence, and whether there are other witnesses.

**The Victim/Witness Coordinator:** The Victim/Witness Coordinator is a professional in the Prosecuting Attorney's office who coordinates the court preparation school, and helps the victim and their loved ones understand the legal process.

**The CACD Investigator:** The State Police Crimes Against Children Division Investigator is assigned to some cases after a report has been made to the child abuse hotline. The investigator's job is to talk to the child, family, witnesses, and the alleged offender to gather all of the information about the report, and coordinate with law enforcement.

**The Social Worker:** The role of the Department of Human Services (DHS), specifically the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is to help protect your child. The DCFS social workers conduct interviews and develop safety plans. They may refer you and your child to counseling.

**The Law Enforcement Office:** Local law enforcement agencies have investigators on the team. These team members interview children, non-offending caregivers suspects and other witnesses, and gather evidence from the scene of the alleged event.

**The Therapist:** Mental health professionals (therapists) on the team help decide how the abuse has affected the child and the caregiver/loved ones. They also decide what can be done to assist them in healing from the experience.

**The SANE Nurse (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner):** Medical experts working with the team have years of experience in examining children for possible sexual or other abuse. The exam involves a regular check-up, and should not be traumatic or painful. The nurse is able to reassure the child that his/her body is, or will be, okay.

**The Child and Family Advocate:** Child and Family Advocates are trained professionals who help the non-offending caregiver, victim, and family when abuse is reported. They also help the non-offending caregiver to connect with services in the community, and to provide support during the aftermath of the abuse report, and throughout the investigation process.

**The Forensic Interviewer:** The Forensic Interviewer is a specially trained professional whose job is to talk to children when allegations of abuse arise. They are trained in the Childfirst interview protocol, and speak to children in a way that is narrative eliciting, and non-suggestive. The forensic interviewers routinely participate in peer review to continually develop their skills and attend ongoing professional training.

## Why Mental Health Therapy For Your Child Is Important!

- It reduces the chances that your child will have emotional issues from the abuse in the future.
- It helps the child to deal with many of the emotions he/she is feeling at the time:

**Guilt/ Shame:** The feeling that they were part of the abuse.

**Fear:** The feeling that the offender might hurt them again.

**Confusion:** The mixed feelings the child has over being angry at the offender but still caring for them.

**Trust Vs. Mistrust:** The child not really knowing who to trust anymore.

**Forgiveness vs. Wanting to stay angry:** Is it okay to be angry but let the bad emotions go?

**Hurt:** The feeling of betrayal by a person that was suppose to love them.

**Anger:** The feeling the child has of being used and not really cared for.

**Depression:** Sadness about all the changes in the family and the child not being sure if he/she has caused the problems.

**Many other emotions maybe present too. This is just an example of a few of the many emotions children feel over being abused.**

- It helps the child deal with the behaviors the emotions are causing.
  - Nightmares
  - Anger Outbursts or Temper Tantrums
  - Touching themselves or someone else
  - Wetting the bed
  - Being withdrawn or clingy
  - More sexual knowledge than other children their age
  - Hitting

**Many other behaviors may be happening. This is just an example of some of the behaviors that abused children can be experiencing.**

## How Mental Health Therapy For Your Child Helps You!

- It helps the parent know how to deal with all the emotions that their child is going through.
- It helps the parent know how to handle all the behaviors that their child is doing.
- It helps the parents deal with the emotions they have about their child being abused.

**Guilt** - The feeling of not protecting their child.

**Frustration**- New behaviors they are seeing in their child now.

**Anger** - At the offender for hurting their child.

**Anger**- That no one is communicating with them about what's going on with their child's case.

**Depression**- Their family is torn apart now.

**Fear**- How am I going to make it now that I am the only one providing financially for the family?

**Fear**- is the offender going to come back and try to get even.

**Parents may be going through many other emotions too. This is just an example of a few that parents can be healing from as they go through the therapy process.**

## Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy An Overview For Children and Families

Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) was developed almost 20 years ago to help children who have experienced or witnessed trauma, such as sexual or physical abuse, a tornado or fire, a motor vehicle accident, violence at home or in the community, or some other type of stressful event. Because children often feel scared, upset, sad or even angry when trauma occurs, TF-CBT provides education about trauma, teaches coping skills, and develops the tools children need to heal.

### What is Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)?

- TF-CBT is a brief treatment of 12 to 16 sessions that can help children begin their recovery quickly.
- The treatment can be used with children ages 3 to 18.
- Children and parents learn new skills to process thoughts and feelings about trauma.
- It is highly recommended that non-offending parents or other caregivers participate so that everyone learns new ways of managing stress.

### Does TF-CBT Work?

- TF-CBT is one of the most effective treatments for children exposed to trauma.
- TF-CBT has been recognized by the federal government as an effective treatment, so the team at AR BEST (Arkansas Building Effective Services for Trauma) has trained therapists all over Arkansas to provide this type of therapy.

### How Do I Know If TF-CBT Is Right for My Child?

- Trained therapists learn how to conduct trauma assessments with children to best understand how to work with them. They will be able to tell you whether TF-CBT is appropriate for your child.
- The assessment will also help a therapist monitor a child's progress and consult with other professionals to improve outcomes for children.

**Getting Ready for Court:  
What Can I Expect?**

If there is to be a trial, your Victim/Witness Coordinator will take your child to the courtroom and show him/her around. You will also be involved in this process. Giving the child an early look at the courtroom and preparing him/her on what to expect can ease some of the child's fears, which may include

- Seeing the alleged offender again
- Not wanting to go
- Wanting it to be over
- Wondering where you will be

If you are a witness, you will not be allowed in the courtroom when your child is testifying. In some cases, it might be easier on your child not to have you there. However, your child should never be in the courtroom without a trusting friendly face, so make sure your Victim/Witness Coordinator, Child and Family Advocate, a best friend, or a relative stays with your child at all times.



**Legal Outcome:  
What do I Tell My Child?**

It is best to be honest and direct with your child. How much you explain depends on your child's age, and what he/she can understand. The most important thing is to let the child know that you are proud of him/her for being brave.

When the case is completed, you may feel let down or have a period of depression. It happens to most caregivers, even if it is a positive experience. If your child hears you express disappointment in the outcome, your child may think you are disappointed in him/her. Instead, find a supportive friend with whom you can share your feelings and frustrations.

Remember, you have done your best in trying to prevent further abuse and hold the abuser responsible for what he/she did. Even if the case was dropped, this is a major accomplishment!

Here are some things you can say to your child if the offender is not held legally accountable:

- Just because they did not find the accused guilty, that does not mean they did not believe you. They have to follow the court's rules.
- You may be wondering how someone can do something wrong or against the law and not be punished. It does not make sense to me, either.
- It does not matter what the court process did. What matters is that you did what you needed to do; You told!
- You are safe. You have been very brave!
- What should we do with the rest of our day?

## Things We Should Never Do With Children

- Never discuss a child's behavior or appearance with another person in the child's presence or within his or her hearing.
- Never tease a child.
- Never ridicule or in any way humiliate a child. Laugh with a child, but never at him or her.
- Never raise your voice in anger and never handle a child roughly.
- Never frighten a child.
- Never deceive a child. Never promise him or her something which you cannot deliver.
- Never show a preference for one child over another. Try to find the likeable things in a child who may seem less attractive than others.
- Do not offer a child a choice when you cannot grant a choice. Do not say, "Would you like to give me that sharp stick?" It would be better to say, "You may put the stick in the basket or on the table."
- Never compare children. Do not say, "See how nicely Johnny builds with blocks." This will not teach the child to build, but it will make him or her dislike Johnny.
- Never threaten or bribe a child.
- Do not deny a child something and then give in because he or she creates a scene. Be very sure your denial is necessary before you make it. Then stick to it.

## How To Help Children With Their Feelings

- Children show their distress and anxiety by being extra sensitive, by withdrawing or by acting out. Give the child extra support, encouragement and patience when she/ he is under stress.
- Be sensitive to the feelings that a child is communicating non-verbally as well as verbally.
- Help children learn to talk about their feelings rather than acting them out, and learn to solve problems verbally rather than physically through modeling better ways to handle situations.
- Model talking about feelings by expressing your own feelings and commenting on the child's emotions. ( I feel sad sometimes when I argue with my friends. Maybe sometimes you do too. )
- Young children need help learning to label their feelings. This helps them tap into emotions, identify them more accurately which will make them better able to deal with them. (To a young child, " I think maybe you're crying because you're very tired." Or, "I know you're crying because Joan took away your ball and that made you unhappy.")
- Help children learn what they can do to calm themselves down when they're upset. For example, sometimes a little time alone is helpful to an older child.
- Reassure a child that all children have feelings in certain situations. ( "sometimes kids get scared and that's ok." "It's frustrating and makes you mad when things don't work").
- Children are sometimes better able to respond to a comment rather than a direct question about what is wrong. ("Gee, you seem a little upset. Maybe you are thinking about your mommy").
- It is helpful sometimes to comment to a child about feelings in the context of a lot of children having those feelings. ("Most kids feel sad or scared when their mommy and daddy fight").

**Books for Kids:**

- It's My Body (Freeman)
- Telling isn't Tattling (Hammerseng)
- The Trouble with Secrets (Johnsen)
- It Happens to Boys Too (Satullo)
- Your Body Belongs to You (Spelman)
- Who Am I? Where Did I Come From? (Westheimer)

**Books for Teens:**

- It Happened to Me (Carter)
- It's Perfectly Normal (Harris)
- How Long Does It Hurt (Mater & Debye)
- Unmasking Sexual Con Games (McGee)

**Books for Parents:**

- Children Changed By Trauma (Whiting-Alexander)
- Children and trauma (Monahon)
- Helping Your Child Recover from Sexual Abuse (Adams)
- Caring for Sexually Abused Children (Kearney)
- When Your Child Has Been Molested (Brohl)
- What Only a Mother Can Tell You About Child Sexual Abuse (Schaefer)

**My Phone Resource List**

Arkansas State Police/Department of Health and Human Services Investigator:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Enforcement Detective/Investigator:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Child and Family Advocate with Grandma's House

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Prosecutor's Offices**

**Boone: 870-7416361**

**Baxter: 870-425-2595**

**Carroll: 870-423-6869**

**Madison: 479-738-1900**

**Marion: 870-449-4018**

**Newton: 870-446-2633**



**“Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light. “**

**-Albus Dumbledore**

This pamphlet was prepared for you by Grandma’s House Children’s Advocacy Center in Harrison, Arkansas. The information inside serves as a source for basic information about the Children’s Advocacy Center, What to expect from the investigation process, and ways to help your child and yourself through the healing process that lies ahead. This is designed to be a starting point, with basic information. If you have specific questions or concerns, please direct them to your Child and Family Advocate by calling 870-391-2224.

**REMEMBER**

If you have any questions about anything in this pamphlet, or that were not answered, please call us at 870-391-2224.



Grandma’s House Children’s Advocacy Center  
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870-391-2224

Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline: ( 844) SAVEACHILD or 1-800-482-5964