

What VIBS can do:

Although the effects of child sexual abuse can be painful and long lasting, children are resilient. With proper support, children can heal from the trauma.

VIBS' Children's Program: VIBS provides counseling to children ages 3 1/2 to 12. Through play and drama therapy, the child and therapist interact using toys, games, stories and other creative materials. The goal is to reinforce safety, comfort and coping skills. Children are invited to speak at their own pace in a non-leading fashion. These services are available for children who have lived with domestic violence or for children who have been sexually abused.

VIBS' Counseling Program is available to teens.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program: SANEs are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide medical exams for rape and sexual assault survivors. Their training includes work with survivors with special needs, including children. These nurses conduct the exam in a compassionate manner in a warm and comfortable environment. To arrange for a SANE exam, go to Good Samaritan Hospital, John T. Mather Memorial Hospital, Peconic Bay Medical Center, or call the police.

Legal Advocacy: VIBS' advocates are experts in legal options and procedures in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, and they work with victims of all ages. Advocates provide court accompaniment, information on victims' rights, and assistance with the criminal justice system.

Child Sexual Abuse is a Crime.



VICTIMS INFORMATION BUREAU OF SUFFOLK

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Breaking the Silence:

Child Sexual Abuse



A Violation of Trust—and a Crime



"He said he'd kill my mommy."



"I get scary dreams."

What professionals say:

Most professionals start by defining child sexual abuse as any sexual contact between an adult and child. It might also mean sexual activity between an older and a younger child. Sometimes the abuser uses physical force, and sometimes the abuser tricks the child with threats or treats. Child sex abuse can include a wide range of activities, such as:

- Touching a child's genitals, making a child touch someone else's genitals, exposing one's genitals to a child
- Showing pornography to a child
- Photographing a child in sexual poses

Child sexual abuse is always exploitation of a child's vulnerability and trust. It is also a crime.

By most estimates, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 7 boys are sexually abused by the time they turn 18.

What children say:

"He told me he'd hurt me if I told anyone."

"She told me what we were doing was normal."

"He told me he'd buy me a new video game."

"She told me it was our secret."

Children often do not voluntarily disclose that someone has sexually abused them, but there are warning signs. Although each child is unique, there are some common indicators of abuse:

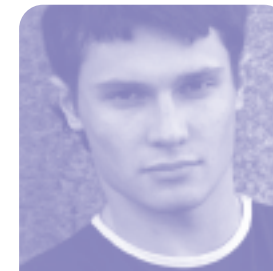
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Changes in behavior, mood swings
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge
- Distraction; "spacing out"
- Not wanting to talk about a secret
- Talking about a new, older friend
- Withdrawal from friends, family and regular activities
- Reverting back to younger behavior, such as bed wetting or thumb sucking

24 Hour Hotline
VIBES
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Who are the abusers?

Sex abusers are most often someone a child knows and trusts: a babysitter, an older child, a teacher, a family friend or relative—even a parent or step-parent. Parents and care takers should be alert to an adult or older child who:

- Is overly affectionate or physical with a child against her wishes
- Insists on time alone with the child or sneaks away with him
- Buys expensive or excessive gifts for the child
- Spends most of his or her time with children rather than with people of the same age
- Regularly offers free babysitting for children, or takes teens and children on overnight outings



"Once I started talking about it, I found I wasn't alone."



"I thought it was my fault... he lied."

What you can do for a sexually abused child:

Call the police, call Child Protective Services (if it's within the family), call VIBS' hotline, listen to the child but let investigators ask the questions, respect her privacy, keep him safe and comfortable.