

What to do if you think a child or adolescent has been sexually or physically assaulted or is living in a violent home and/or community.

- Be aware of the symptoms to look for in the child.
- Be calm when asking questions.
- Allow the child to express their feelings in their own words.
- Be supportive and tell the child that you believe what they are saying.
- Do not blame the child
- Do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- Remember that the child may be frightened, confused and embarrassed.

The way you react, what you say and what you do will affect how the child learns to cope with the abuse.

Violence towards our youth has always thrived on silence.

We must help to end this silence.



Since 1977, this program is funded by the Massachusetts Office for Victims Assistance through a Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



THE WOMEN'S CENTER

The door to a future free from violence

All services in
The Child and Adolescent
Trauma Program and at the
Women's Center
are free
and confidential.



**Together
we can
prevent
child
abuse**

**CHILD AND
ADOLESCENT
TRAUMA PROGRAM**



THE WOMEN'S CENTER

405 County Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
Business Office: 508.996.3343

24-Hour HOTLINE
Support and Referrals
508.999.6636

SERVICES PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Comprehensive services to youth, ages 0-18, who have been traumatized by physical, sexual or domestic violence.

Services include assessment and treatment with trained child therapists and supportive services.

Services are available in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

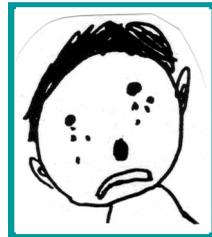
Outreach information is available to the Southcoast community regarding childhood trauma, impact, symptoms and prevention.

Clinicians are trained in Expressive Arts; Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT); Attachment Regulation Competency (ARC); Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment (SMART); Eye Movement Desensitization and Regulation; Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) Clients are offered individual, family and group therapies.

FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ASSAULT OF YOUTH

Sexual and physical assaults are a major public health problem facing youth in today's society.

- ◆ 1 out of 4 girls will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18.
- ◆ 1 out of 5 boys will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18.



Sexual assault of children and adolescents is a crime that includes genital fondling, rape (oral, vaginal, rectal) or exposure as well as trafficking and internet pornography.

Perpetrators of sexual and physical violence against youth are most often a trusted friend or a family member, not a stranger.

Perpetrators will use threats, bribes, promises and gifts to ensure the victim's cooperation and silence.

Youth rarely lie about being sexually or physically assaulted.

Children and adolescents who are victims of physical and sexual assault sometimes initiate similar behaviors with other children or adolescents.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN YOUTH

Behavioral characteristics: the following may indicate that a child is a victim of sexual or physical trauma.

- changes in appetite
- sleeping disturbances (nightmares, bedwetting, insomnia)
- running away from home
- drug and alcohol abuse
- suicide threats or attempts
- fearful or suspicious of adults
- withdrawal from family and friends
- poor self-image, low self-esteem
- fear, worry, overly serious, depression

Children who have been physically assaulted may become physically violent towards siblings, peers or younger children.

Children who have been sexually assaulted may initiate inappropriate sexual play or sexual violence with siblings, peers, or younger children.

Physical signs of sexual assault may include:

- bruising, bleeding or infections in genital/rectal area
- soiled underclothing
- chronic abdominal pain and sore throats
- painful urination or urinary tract infections
- vaginal discharge, venereal disease, venereal warts, herpes
- pregnancy

FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN WHO WITNESS VIOLENCE

Children may witness violence in their homes or in their communities. This violence can include domestic violence, gang violence, homicide, verbal assaults or hate crimes.

Watching or hearing another person being harmed physically, sexually or verbally can have a profound impact on children.

The long term impact of exposure to violence can include growing up to behave the same way as the violent parent, feeling hostile towards loved ones, or adopting the role of victim with feelings of powerlessness.

Most violent perpetrators claim to have been either abused or witnessed abuse in their homes. Abusive behavior is learned early in life.

Children who are continually exposed to domestic violence may:

- have temper tantrums and act out violently towards self and/or others
- have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, become anxious and worry that they are to blame for the violence
- show signs of depression and low self-esteem
- have frequent illness, eating problems and drug/alcohol abuse

Children who witness domestic violence are:

- 6 times more likely to commit suicide
- 24 times more likely to be sexually active
- 60 times more likely to develop delinquent behaviors as adolescents