

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

If your child has reported that he/she has been sexually abused, please contact your local police department or child protection agency.

Anoka County Child Protection 763-422-7125

Hennepin County Child Protection 612-348-3552

Definition:

Excessive touching, viewing or showing one's genitals to peers or adults that makes others uncomfortable; asking a peer or adult to engage in sexual activity using physical force or coercion; touching of one's private parts in a public place.

Behavior:

Why could this be happening?

- Children often imitate the behavior of others. A child may be imitating behavior she/he sees or hears. (Be aware of what or to whom the child is exposed. Monitor television, videos and the internet closely.)
- A child may have received a lot of attention for inappropriate sexual behavior and/or received a powerful reaction.

Typical Development:

- Young children are naturally curious about their bodies and the bodies of others.
- Toddlers often explore their own bodies and learn about their body parts through touch.
- Young children may engage in genital play or stimulation to reduce tension or to help them fall asleep.
- Young children may engage in play (for example "Doctor") that includes looking and touching to learn about the differences between their bodies.
- A child may ask questions about mom's or dad's body ("Why don't I have breasts like mommy?" or "Why is daddy's penis bigger than mine?").

- A child may occasionally experiment with sex words or poop/pee talk to be silly or to gain attention.
- Children need information, limits and boundaries regarding appropriate sexual behavior. Teach about “good touch and bad touch.”

When to be Concerned:

- If behavior is persistent and cannot be redirected.
- If there are sudden changes in sexual behavior or interest that is not age appropriate.
- If there are physical signs of infection or pain or irritation of genitals.
- If a child is acting out sexual behavior that could harm self or others.
- If a child’s sexual behaviors are beyond the range of “normal”.
- If a child has nightmares, new fears of falling asleep or of the dark.
- If a child “targets” victims in terms of younger or more vulnerable children.

Possible Resources:

Midwest Children’s Resource Center, Early Childhood Family Education, pediatrician, child psychologist/ mental health professional