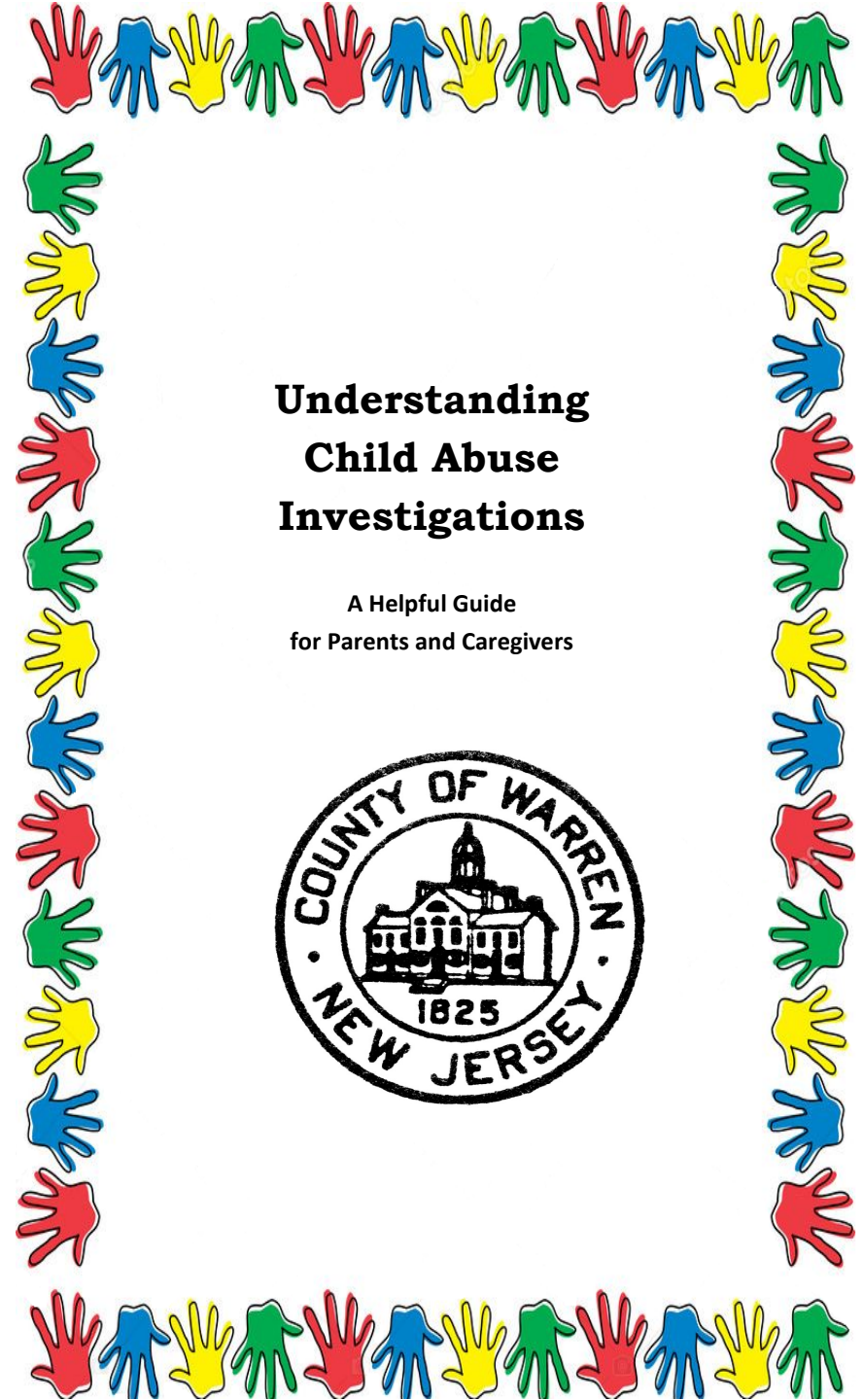


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Revised 9/28/21



Understanding Child Abuse Investigations

A Helpful Guide
for Parents and Caregivers



Taking Care of Yourself

You are going through a very difficult time and you probably feel pressured from many directions. Although you are trying to take care of a lot of other people, you also need to take care of yourself. Your well-being is a key to you being able to take care of others, so you need to find time to do something just for yourself. Do it regularly. It may be difficult to do, but is in the best interests of you and your child

Helpful Hotlines and Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous

1-800-2445-1377

24 hr. number toll free in NJ only)

Center for Evaluation and Counselling

Sparta, NJ

973-512-3700

Centerforeval.org

Child Assault Prevention Program

617-969-5906

Njcap.org

211-Addiction Hotline

1-800-238-2333

Family Guidance of Warren County

908-689-1000 (Washington NJ)

908-852-0333 (Hackettstown NJ)

908-454-4470 (Phillipsburg NJ)

www.fgwc.org

Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center

New Brunswick NJ

732-448-1000

Department of Children and Families

Division of Child Protection & Permanency

(Formerly Division of Youth & Family Services) 9 am — 5 pm

1-800-392-2654

24 Hr. Reporting Line 1-877-NJ-ABUSE

(1-877-652-2873)

Perform Care

24 hr. 1-877-652-7624

www.performcarenj.org

Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Crisis Center

908-453-4181 (HOTLINE)

908-453-4121

www.besafewc.org

Catholic Charities

908-454-2074

www.thewaytohelp.com

First Call For Help

980-454-4850

www.norwescap.org

Warren County Prosecutor's Office Office of Victim Witness Advocacy

908-475-6284

www.wcpo-nj.us

Victims of Crime Compensation Office

877-658-2221

www.njvictims.org

Table of Contents

If you are especially close to your family, you will probably want to talk to them about your child's abuse and how it is affecting the family. It is important to keep in mind how these relatives usually react to stressful situations. The reactions may include hysteria, horror, emotional distress, sincere concern, embarrassment, disgust, disinterest, or curiosity about details. If you know they will react in a negative way, you may not want to share the information with them unless it becomes necessary. It is important to maintain your child's sense of privacy. On the other hand, be careful not to make it seem like a dirty secret, causing more shame for your child.

Reference:

When Your Child Has Been Molested By Katherine B. Hagans & Joyce Case

What To Expect from Others

If some information has been made public you can probably expect questions or comments from others.

"What exactly did they do to your child?"

"Are you sure your child didn't make it up?"

"Why didn't you know it was happening!"

"If it were my child, I'd just move away."

"Your poor child must be feeling really guilty.."

Remember, you don't owe anyone an explanation. "I'd rather not talk about it" is an acceptable response, or simply say, "It has been a very difficult time for us." "I appreciate your concern" is another response you might want to use. Or it may be easier to just nod an acknowledgement of what someone says.

Keep in mind that most people have very little knowledge about sexual abuse. For example, in response to the comment about your child feeling guilty, you could say that children often feel unnecessary guilt in these cases until they are assured that they are not responsible in any way for what happened. As a parent, you might also be experiencing some guilt and, as a result, you may feel defensive. In that case, a good response is, "Parents do their best but we are only human." Adults are the people most likely to say something to your child. You may want to tell your child that if someone says, "I'm sorry about what happened to you," they should respond with a simple "Thank you." Let your child know they do not have to respond to any comments or questions. They should just say "My mom and/or dad told me not to talk about it now." If other children comment or tease, your child might say, "It could happen to anyone, including you."

Reference:

When Your Child Has Been Molested By Katherine B. Hagam & Joyce Case

What is Warren County Children's Advocacy Center?	2
Welcome	2
What is Child Abuse?	2
Who Should Report Child Abuse?	3
How do Parents Sometimes Feel When Abuse has Been Reported?	4
Steps the Abuser Takes to Set Children Up	5
Signs Sometimes Shown by Abused Children	6
How Should You Act Towards Your Child?	7
Our Team of Professionals	8
The Investigation Process	10
Key Facts about the Investigation	10
The Medical Examination	10
Learning about the Legal System	11
The Court System's Response to Abuse	12
How the Criminal Court Processes Cases	12
How the Civil Court Process Work	13
Ways to Prepare for Court	13
Work with the System	14
Your Support is Critical	14
Telling your Child about the Legal Outcome	15
What to Say to your Child if the Offender is Not Held Legally Accountable	15
Responding to Comments from Others	15
What to Expect from Others	16
Taking Care of Yourself	17
Helpful Hotlines and Resources	17

What is Warren County Children's Advocacy Center?

The Child Advocacy Center is designed to aid child victims of physical and sexual abuse. It is a...

Safe, child friendly place where victims of child abuse can report crimes to the proper authorities.

A place where staff arranges help and support for children who may have been hurt by others by providing

- ♥ A secure environment
- ♥ A professional and compassionate staff
- ♥ Information and referrals for counselling and other services required

Welcome

Your child is here because of concerns about possible abuse. Our goals are to:

- Do the best job possible in finding out what happened
- Work with the legal system to help your child and family
- Help you understand the child protective and legal systems
- Help make the process as comfortable as possible for you and your family
- Help your children and family begin to heal

We hope this handbook will help you understand more about child physical and sexual abuse. We also hope it will help you understand the system we use to respond to a report of abuse. Please, call us if you have questions.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child which harms or injures the child. Abuse can also be behaviors that put the child at risk of harm or injury.

Physical Abuse is when a child sustains injury at the hands of an adult. It is the purposeful hurting of a child. Examples of physical abuse include kicking, shaking, biting, burning, pinching and pushing. Child abuse is not discipline, rather it is when punishment becomes extreme or when an angry parent loses control and takes it out on the child.

Children who are physically abused suffer in many ways. The abuse can be a single incident or ongoing incidents. The abuse may cause injuries that range from minor to severe. The injuries may be very painful physically. Injuries from child abuse may be visible, however some injuries are more difficult to detect. Sometimes, the abuse can lead to serious medical problems or permanent disability for the child. It can even cause the death of a child.

Celebrate when the case is over, no matter what the outcome. You can celebrate the completion of the legal process and the fact you and your child did your best. You and your child worked hard, put in a lot of time and energy and did the right thing by reporting the abuse.

Telling your child about the legal outcome

It is best to be honest and direct with your child. How much you will explain depends on your child's age and level of understanding. You should also consider previous discussions with the professionals in your child's case.

The most important thing is to let the child know you are proud of them for being brave.

When the case is completed, you may feel let down or have a wide range of emotions. It happens to many parents. If your child hears you express disappointment in the outcome, they may think you are disappointed in them. Instead, talk with your Family Advocate, Victim Witness Advocate, therapist or a supportive friend to share your feelings and frustration.

Remember, you have done your best in trying to prevent further abuse, and you held the offender accountable for what they did. Even if the case was not prosecuted or the offender is found "not guilty," speaking about the abuse is a major accomplishment.

What to say to your child if the alleged offender is not held legally accountable

"Just because the jury didn't find the suspect guilty doesn't mean they didn't believe you. It's just that they have to follow the court's rules."

"You may be wondering how someone can do something wrong or against the law and not get punished. It doesn't make sense to me, either."

"It doesn't matter what the court process is. What matters is that you did what you needed to do..you told."

"You are safe. You have been very brave."

Responding to Comments from Others

One challenge your family will face will be what to say to others about the abuse. Your child may feel embarrassed and/or responsible. If there is no publicity or public awareness about the case, you can decide who you will tell. Let your child know which relatives, friends or school personnel will be told and let your child have some choice about who will be informed.

Work with the system

The system is responsible for protecting children and holding offenders accountable. The more information and cooperation you give to the team of professionals working in the system, the better job they can do on the case. Here are some basic tips for working with professionals in the system:

- Be calm and reassuring to your child. Don't coach your child on what to say. It is important for the facts to come out in your child's own words.
- When you are asked for information, try to provide as many facts as you can. Cases are built on the four W's: Who, What, When and Where. Don't guess if you don't know the answer to a question. Be honest and say you don't know.
- Your feelings are important. Feelings are valuable in giving investigators insight, so tell how you feel and why you feel that way. Although only facts are talked about in court, feelings can give investigators ideas on how to proceed.
- Always be honest, even though the truth may not seem favorable to yourself or others. Not being honest may impact your credibility and damage the case.
- Try not to overreact. It is a difficult time and emotions are probably running high. Losing control can hurt the case and overshadow the needs of the innocent victim... your child.
- Love, support and protect your child at all costs. If the alleged offender is a significant person to you, it can be very difficult to balance your feelings for them with the need to protect your child. Remember that your child relies on you to make healthy, protective decisions.
- Cooperate. You may feel investigators are prying into your personal life, but information is necessary and vital to the case and your child's welfare. The sooner the facts come out, the sooner the case can be resolved and you can return to a more normal life.

Your support is critical

Always remember that the well being of your child should be your main objective. Don't lose yourself in the legal system, because it is only one step in the process. Therapists who talk with adult survivors of child sex abuse often hear them say, "My parents knew and didn't do anything about it." Your child will never say that if you do everything you can after a disclosure of abuse. Helping your child understand that you will not tolerate abuse is a very important message.

Aside from the physical forms of child abuse, children can also suffer from emotional abuse. *Emotional abuse* is when a child is made to feel very bad as a result of an adult's behavior or words. Examples of emotional abuse include frightening, threatening, humiliating or isolating a child. Criticizing a child, forcing a child to commit crimes or withholding love and attention are other examples of emotional abuse. Witnessing domestic violence is yet another form of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can result in low self-esteem, problems with relationships, and other emotional difficulties.

Child abuse does not discriminate. Child abusers and the children they abuse come from all walks of life. Child abuse is found in every racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic group. Someone you know may be abusing a child. Someone you know may be an abused child.

Millions of cases of child abuse are reported each year. Many more go unreported.

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual Abuse is any sexual act performed on, or in the presence of a child. These acts include exposing a child to nudity and sexually explicit materials, fondling over or under clothing, penetration with an offender's body part or other object, having the child perform sexual acts, photographing a disrobed child, having a child simulate a sexual act, or any other sexual conduct.

Sexual abuse is also known as molestation or exploitation. Sexual molestation does not always mean sexual intercourse. Sometimes, older children molest younger or smaller children. Sexual acts between children become molestation when one child uses coercion, force or violence to get the other child to do the acts, or if there is a significant age difference. Young molesters should also be reported so that they can receive help.

Sexual exploitation includes allowing a child to observe obscene materials or sexual acts, or allowing someone else to sexually abuse a child.

Sexual molestation is overwhelming to children, especially when an adult is involved. Most children are taught to trust adults. They tend to believe what adults tell them is true, rather than to rely on their own feelings. This trust tends to work against them in two ways. If the abuser tells a child what is being done is OK, the child may doubt his or her feelings to the contrary. If a parent's initial reaction to a report of molestation is, "this can't be true?" the child may wonder if their own feelings are mistaken. Children almost never tell about abuse simply to create problems. More often, they fear that telling will make people angry with them. It is extremely difficult for children to report abuse.

Reference:

When your Child has been Molested by Katherine B. Haps & Joyce Case

Who should report child abuse?

Under the New Jersey law N.J.SA 9:6-8.10, every citizen has the responsibility to report to the authorities when they, in good faith, suspect a child is being abused. Reports can be made anonymously. If you have information about someone abusing a child, call the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) immediately at 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873). This hotline will be answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How do 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 reaction is completely normal. The disclosure can affect your life in many ways, and it takes time to adjust. The following are some of the common thoughts and feelings parents have. You may feel one or more of these at the same time, or you may move from one to another. Shock. Denial Disbelief: Your first reaction may be to not believe or accept the possibility that it really happened. After all, it truly is hard to accept someone hurt your child! Or, you may believe it happened, but feel no real harm was done. Parents often experience denial because it is too overwhelming to accept that the abuse occurred and the possibility that there may be after-effects. For some people it takes time to overcome denial and face the realities of abuse. At times you may feel angry at yourself for not protecting the child. You may feel angry at the perpetrator for what they did. You may even feel angry with the child. Be honest about your feelings and share them with a trusted person, perhaps a counselor.

Helplessness: You probably do not know what to expect and feel that things are out of control. Some parents may fear that their children will be taken away. Learning about how cases proceed through the systems you may be involved in may help you feel more empowered. Ask the professionals working with you about the next steps to anticipate along the way.

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

If enough evidence exists to go forward, the case will be placed on the court's calendar and will have several hearings as the case is prepared for trial. The case may be settled by agreement without a trial. Many cases are settled this way, known as a plea agreement, with the defendant admitting guilt. A plea agreement is reached when the prosecutor, the defendant, the defense attorney, and the judge agree on a charge and sentence. Your input will also be considered during the plea negotiations. The offender may have to pay fines, serve jail time, or be placed on probation. He may be ordered to attend counseling.

Even if the case does not go to trial it is important to remember your child and family may need some help in dealing with the after-effects of your experience. You may feel investigators, lawyers and judges do not care because they avoid showing emotions. In fact, professionals in this field do care, and part of caring involves remaining objective and calm in the face of an extremely emotional situation.

How the family court process works

When the Division of Child Protection and Permanency investigates abuse allegations it may become necessary to access the Family Court division of the Superior Court to secure services and address any risk to the child. The Family Court sets a schedule of hearings. At these hearings, the case plan developed between DCP&P and the family is reviewed. Children are rarely asked to provide testimony; rather the court relies on reports from professionals.

Ways to prepare for court

If there is a trial in the Criminal Court your Victim Witness Advocate will assist in preparing your family for the experience. The Advocate can show you and your child around the courthouse prior to the actual trial. Seeing the courtroom and learning about the court staff can ease fears your child may have about going to court. These fears may include seeing the abuser again, not wanting to talk in front of strangers, or worrying about where you will be during testimony. If you are a witness, you may not be allowed in the courtroom when your child is testifying. In some cases, it might be easier on a child not to have a parent in the courtroom. Your advocate can help develop a plan for your child to be emotionally supported by a friend, a family member, or therapist throughout the proceedings.

The legal system is complex and can be confusing at times. To help you through it, the Prosecutor's Office will assign a Victim Advocate to work with you and your case. The Advocate will help you through this difficult time by explaining the process, acting as a link between you and the detectives and prosecutors, answering your questions about the legal system, and explaining the types of victim assistance and services available to you. Please contact your Advocate whenever needed; they are available to assist you throughout the entire court process and will even accompany you to court hearings.

The court systems response to abuse

The legal system can be confusing and frightening to children and families. Part of this confusion stems from the fact that two different legal (court) systems can be working on the same case at the same time. These two systems are the Criminal System (Criminal Court) and the Civil System (Family Court). These court systems have different purposes.

The Criminal Court is more concerned primarily with finding the accused guilty or not guilty, and may hold a trial to decide the outcome. The criminal trial focuses on issues such as:

- Is there enough evidence to prove the child was abused?
- What illegal acts occurred?
- Was there a confession?
- If proven guilty, what punishment should the offender receive?

The criminal court needs to prove the guilt of the suspect "beyond a reasonable doubt."

The Family court is concerned primarily with the safety of the child, and focuses on issues like custody, supervised visitation and counseling. A number of different court hearings can be held to decide these issues. The decisions in this system do not depend on whether or not the criminal system finds guilt. The family court's burden of proof is a "preponderance of evidence."

How the criminal court processes cases

Using evidence gathered through the investigation and the input received from the team, the Prosecutor's Office determines if there is enough evidence to charge the defendant and present the case to Grand Jury. The prosecutor will describe this process in greater detail; feel free to ask questions at any time.

Repulsion: Thinking about a child being abused is hard to do. In addition to anger, you may feel disgust about what was done to an innocent victim.

Triggered: If you have a history of being abused yourself, memories may come flooding back. Working through your feelings with a therapist may be an important step in healing yourself as you support your child.

Guilt, Self-blame: You may feel the abuse was your fault. But the offender was 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 handbook is a good first step.

Hurt and Betrayal: It is normal to feel hurt over the loss of your child's innocence. You may also have lost a spouse or partner, if that person was the offender. You may have lost friends. It is very important to take time to grieve for these losses. You may feel isolated because you don't feel you can discuss this with other people.

Sexual Inadequacy: Some people believe the offender turned to the child because their relations with him/her 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.

Fear of Violence or Retribution: You may fear the offender will try to harm you or your children for reporting the abuse. Most communities have domestic violence and victim assistance programs you can turn to for help and guidance.

Fear of Drug or Alcohol Abuse: You may be afraid that you or your child will abuse drugs or alcohol because of the stress. If you need help, do not hesitate to find a recovery center.

Desire to Take Action: Some parents want to investigate their child's report on their own. While this is a natural, protective reaction, you may be emotionally less objective. Allow the professionals who are trained to conduct investigations to do their work and focus your energy on you and your child.

Steps the abuser takes to set children up

Some parents wonder how it is possible for their children to be abused. Offenders use many tactics to gain access to children. These include:

Seeking out an approachable child: Abusers often pick children who are easy to get to, such as relatives, friends or neighbors. They may also seek out children who have emotional needs for friendship and attention

Establishing a relationship with the child: Abusers often seek ways to build trust and friendships with children. They may spend time playing with them, volunteering for child care duty, being their buddy or may buy them candy or presents. They may be coaches, camp supervisors, or leaders in community groups that provide activities for children.

Breaking down the child's resistance to touch: Abusers may find ways to touch children a lot. As a result, the children are often confused when the touch becomes sexual. The abuser may play games with a lot of physical contact, like wrestling, and they may tickle children and sneak sexual touches.

Finding ways to isolate a child: Abusers find excuses to be alone with children so they can molest them. For example, they may babysit, invite them to sleep over, give them rides, or take them camping.

Blaming the child and keeping the secret: Abusers try to make the children feel responsible so they won't tell. They use statements like these: "You know you like the way I touch you," or "If you tell, people will think you are bad." They might say, "If you tell our 'special secret', I will go to jail," or, "If you tell your mother, she won't love you anymore."

Reference:

Helping Your Child Recover From Sexual Abuse by Caren Adaras, M.A. & Jennifer Fay, M.A.

Signs sometimes shown by abused children

Children may have some of the following symptoms as the result of abuse:

- Sustained or regular bouts of nausea/upset stomach
- Change in appetite
- Crying
- Nightmares
- Change in sleep patterns
- Anger and mood changes
- Withdrawal from others
- Avoidance of school/friends
- Excessive masturbation or touching self or others
- Attention seeking

The medical examination will begin with a head-to-toe examination. If necessary, the genitalia will be examined with the aid of a device called a colposcope. This instrument is used for documentation and magnification purposes only. The colposcope will not physically touch your child, rather it makes it easier for the doctor to view any existing injuries or abnormalities. Through the colposcope the genital examination is photographically documented. In the event a second opinion is needed, the digital photographs will be used rather than subjecting the child to a repeat exam. The documentation is kept as a part of your child's medical record and is stored securely by the Prosecutor's Office

Should your child need testing for infections or sexually transmitted infections, appropriate cultures will be obtained during the examination. The doctor is available for you to discuss additional details, unanswered questions, or concerns you may have prior to the examination.

Learning about the legal system

The legal process can be a long one, moving at a pace very different from the time your child needs to heal. Emotional wounds may be reopened by the various proceedings, which may take months or even years to complete. Court dates may often be changed and delayed over and over again, a dynamic out of your control. Try to be patient and remember that people within the system are working to gain the best outcome for you and your child. The team approach attempts to keep these complicated cases as simple as possible.

It is very difficult to predict what will happen for you and your child after the report has been made and the case is in the legal system. Sometimes the chance to speak up about what happened can be a good thing for the child, whether or not the abuser is convicted. Many children are relieved to think someone more powerful will tell the offender he/she was wrong and help protect them. For other children, the events following the report can be scary.

You can make the process easier for your child by working with the authorities and not against them. The legal system may be able to protect your child from future unsupervised contact with the offender. Working through the legal system is also a way to keep other children safe because many offenders may be more compliant with treatment with the force of the legal system holding them accountable.

The investigation process

The following are the basic steps in an investigation of child sexual abuse:

- Someone reports suspicion of abuse to authorities; either law enforcement or the Division of Child Protection and Permanency.
- Interviews are conducted with the child. A law enforcement officer and/or a social worker will do the interview.
- Medical exams are conducted as necessary.
- Law enforcement and/or DCP&P will continue the investigation, which may include an interview with the alleged offender.
- A team of professionals (The Multidisciplinary Team discussed above) will meet to discuss the case and decide how to manage it. The team consists of prosecutors, law enforcement officers, child protective service workers, medical professionals, mental health providers, victim advocates and family advocates.
- Some cases may be prosecuted in the criminal justice system. Plans for managing all cases, whether charges are filed or not, will be made.

Key facts about the investigation

You will be asked to wait outside the room while your child is being interviewed. Being left out can make you feel as if you are not very important to the process or to your child. Please be assured your involvement is very important. In fact, you may be the key to understanding what has happened. Even so, many times more accurate information is obtained if you are not in the room. In your presence your child may be unwilling to tell important details because they want to spare you from hearing them. Sometimes parents cannot control their emotions about what they might hear, or they may place pressure on the child to tell in a way that can complicate the legal process. Most interviewers will take the time to make sure your child is comfortable without you. They may let the child see you interact with them and will let your child know where you will be during the interview. It should be made clear to the child that you are available if necessary.

Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center/Medical Examination

Should your child require a medical examination, it will be performed in a non-threatening, non-invasive manner by a physician specifically trained in the area of child abuse and neglect. Under no circumstances will your child be forced to undergo this examination.

- Bedwetting, lack of control over bowels
- Lying

Community therapeutic agencies usually offer services to help overcome the effects of trauma. Children react differently depending on age, the extent of the abuse, support from others, and their relationship with the offender.

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR AFFECTING THE CHILD'S RECOVERY IS THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM THE CAREGIVER. It is this simple. If you do everything you can to support your child, the chances of recovery are much greater. If you feel torn between loyalty to your child and loyalty to the offender, find a professional to help you sort it out.

How should you act towards your child?

Provide safety, love and support. Let him or her know it is okay to cry or be mad. Make sure your child understands it is not his or her fault. Don't coach or pressure your child to talk about things. These are some things you can say that will really help your child:

- I believe you.
- I know it's not your fault.
- I'm glad I know about it.
- I'm sorry this happened to you.
- I will take care of you.
- I'm not sure what will happen next.
- Nothing about you made this happen.
- This happened to other children too.
- You don't need to take care of me.
- I am upset, but not with you.
- I'm angry with the person who did this.
- I'm sad; you may see me cry. I will be able to take care of you.
- I am not mad at you.
- I don't know why they did it. They have a problem.
- You can still love someone but hate what they did to you
- Its okay to talk to me or your counselor about it

Here are some things you **can do**:

- Return to a normal routine as soon as possible
- See that your child receives therapy as soon as possible. Trying to sweep the problem under the rug usually causes more problems because it will not go away

- Find help for yourself.
- You don't have to do this alone.
- Teach your child the rules of personal safety.
- Tell them what to do if someone tries to touch them in an uncomfortable way.
- Be careful not to question your child about the abuse. If you do, you can jeopardize the case in court against your child's abuser. Specially trained professionals will interview your child to obtain the necessary information without harming the case or further traumatizing him/her. If your child wants to talk about what happened, listen supportively, but do not probe.
- Keep yourself and your child away from the person suspected of the abuse. This is to protect you, the child and the case.
- Never coach or advise your child about how to act or what to say to professionals or investigators. Doing so can seriously damage the case. Simply encourage the child to tell the truth.
- Avoid discussing adult issues with your child. Children may feel an unrealistic sense of responsibility for events out of their control.
- Your child may need an extra sense of physical security. Stay close and assure your child that you will keep him/her safe.
- Remember to give attention to your other children.

Our Team of Professionals

Our community has a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) of professionals which meets monthly to collaborate on cases of reported abuse. The role of the team members are described below.

The Assistant Prosecutor is the lawyer representing the State. The Assistant Prosecutor (AP) works with the Prosecutor's Office detectives throughout the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. The AP determines whether or not charges will be filed. Some determining factors considered are age and maturity of the victim, the child's ability to testify, whether or not the suspect has confessed, presence of medical evidence, and whether or not there are other witnesses.

The Prosecutor's Office Detective is a law enforcement officer specially trained to investigate cases of child sexual and physical abuse. Detectives interview children, non-offending parents or other caregivers, suspects, and other witnesses, and gather evidence from the scene of the alleged abuse

The Victim Witness Advocate is a professional in the Prosecutor's Office helps victims understand their rights and roles within the criminal justice process, explains the legal proceedings, coordinates court preparation and helps link families with needed services. The Victim Witness Advocate will keep you apprised of the status of your case as it moves through the criminal justice system.

The Case Work Supervisor from the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) supervises the case worker who is assigned to help protect your child. DCP&P workers conduct joint interviews with detectives from the Prosecutor's Office. After speaking with the children and non-offending parent(s) / guardian(s) a safety plan is developed that meets the needs of the child and family. They may refer you and/or your child to counseling or other services.

The Deputy Attorney General is the lawyer that represents DCP&P in Family Court, working with the case worker to address issues such as civil substantiation of abuse, child placement, custody or visitation.

The Physician working with the team is a pediatrician with expertise in examining children for possible abuse. Examinations are offered to all children. It is important to note that an exam may not indicate if the child has been abused. Eighty percent of all children who have been abused have normal exams, even with a history of penetration, so the team does not rely upon exam results alone to prove abuse. An important advantage of the exam is that it allows the doctor to assure the child their body is healthy, in addition to treating conditions which may be apparent.

The Forensic Nurse Examiner is skilled in conducting examinations for the purposes of collecting forensic evidence. She ensures evidence is collected and preserved in a manner consistent with the requirements of police laboratories and court rules.

The Therapists are mental health professionals on the team who help the child and family in healing from abuse.