

## How can caregivers keep their children safe?

### **Talk to your child about personal body safety:**

- Children are never too young to start conversations about body safety.
- Make talking to your child about body safety an ongoing dialogue rather than a single conversation.
- Be calm and confident before discussing this topic with your child.
- Do not scare your child; your tone should be neutral, educational, and empowering.
- Let your child know that you are always there for him/her and always want to protect him/her.
- Teach your child the correct names for their body parts.
  - This creates no negative connotation
  - Normalizes all body parts
  - Gives children the vocabulary that helps a trusted adult understand a disclosure
- Talk to your child about their “gut” feelings
  - Children have good instincts and we can teach them to trust those instincts
  - Use real life examples
- Teach your child that the parts of their body that a bathing suit covers are private parts and that no one is allowed to see or touch them there.
- You don’t want to only focus on “strangers”
  - 90% of children are abused by someone they know and trust. It is important to focus on the inappropriate behaviors of a person instead of how a child may know them or not know them
- Use concrete examples of touches that are appropriate and not appropriate
  - When you go to the doctor (to make sure child is healthy)
  - Diaper changing (to make sure child is clean)
  - Applying medicine (to make sure child is healthy)
  - Bathing (to make sure child is clean)
- Teach your child the difference between secrets and surprises
  - No touch would ever need to be a secret, we can always talk about touches

- Secrets may make us feel bad/sad, surprises are fun/exciting
- Help your child identify 5 trusted or safe adults they can tell if anyone made them feel uncomfortable
  - Discuss the importance of telling an adult and that they will not ever be in trouble
  - Of the trusted adults, have some be in the home and some outside of the home
- You can empower your child to say NO if someone makes them feel uncomfortable
  - Let your child know that if they did not say no, they can still tell and will not be in trouble

**Be familiar with policies and practices of organizations where your child spends time:** \*Churches, camps, after school programs, etc.

- What is the policy of staff and children being alone together (one to one policy)?
- What is the staff/child ratio?
- What are the child maltreatment reporting policies of the organization?
- Does the staff regularly receive child abuse prevention/mandated reporter training?
- What types of background checks have the staff completed?

**Other tips:**

- Minimize one on one interactions with children and adults \*80% of child sexual abuse happens in an isolated one on one situation
  - Make sure doors stay open at family gatherings and sleepovers
  - Require multiple adults supervise children
  - Make it observable
  - Plan for interruptions
- Create a code word with your child that they could say or text to caregiver if they felt uncomfortable in a situation
- Do not force your child to hug and kiss other people.
  - Sends a message that we expect them to prioritize the wants of others over their own feelings

- Give them options: waving, fist bumping, thumbs up, saying goodbye, etc.
- Watch for changes in your child's behavior and ask questions