

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

*If you want to help your child in concrete ways, be creative, but recognize your limitations and do not offer more than you can give. Any assistance, however small it seems to you, will demonstrate your concern and care. Your care and help can aid your child's recovery and healthy adjustment.*

## GOING OUT

Sometimes the daily routines of life will be threatening to a child dealing with the aftermath of sexual abuse or assault. Traveling home from school or even grocery shopping may be frightening to them. If your child expresses concern about their safety in these situations, you might offer to drive them home or accompany them on public transportation.

## DOMESTIC CONCERNS

For some time after the attack, routine chores and responsibilities may seem burdensome to your child, and they may be grateful for assistance. Offer to help with these tasks and be prepared to follow through.

## HOME SECURITY

Regardless of where the sexual abuse occurred, the victim will probably be concerned about the safety of the house or apartment. Reassure them of existing locks and safety precautions. If they would like, you can install locks on the doors and windows. They may want to move to a new apartment or house. If it happened at home, changing the furniture around is sometimes helpful.

## NEED TO GET AWAY

Depending upon the circumstances of the attack, your child may appreciate having a place to stay for awhile away from home. Alternatively, they may appreciate not being home alone. For children who have been sexually abused or assaulted, fear is a predominant emotion for a considerable time afterwards. It can surface any time - especially when they are feeling vulnerable. It may intensify when they are alone.

**Note:** Keep in mind that, because you are the parent, the pain will be closer to you as you take on the role of comforter. Knowing and respecting your own limitations is important.

## FINANCIAL CONCERNS

For many, sexual violence has considerable financial consequences. You may incur the expense of moving to a new home, or making other lifestyle changes that increase living expenses. They may be eligible for financial assistance from the MN Crime Victims Reparations Board (1-888-622-8799).

## PROFESSIONAL HELP

Make sure that your child knows that there are community resources to contact for support. If your child seems interested, offer to help them get information.

If you choose to seek counseling or therapy from a psychologist or psychiatrist for your child, be aware that not all of them have had training in the special needs of victims of sexual violence. You might do some screening of potential therapists by calling and asking them if their areas of expertise include counseling for child victims. You may also want to ask what ages they have worked with.

Call the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center at 320-251-4357 or 1-800-237-5090 for a referral if you need one.

## GOING TO COURT

If the attacker is caught and prosecuted, your support will be most important. There is likely to be contact with a county attorney as well as one or more hearing and trial dates. You and your child may have to go to court.

## GETTING INVOLVED

If you are feeling frustrated because you aren't able to help as much as you would like, consider getting help for yourself. Contact the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center at 320-251-4357 or 1-800-237-5090. Services are free and confidential. You may also want to become active in promoting prevention education in your schools and organizations, and becoming active in lobbying for funding and laws to promote the reduction of sexual violence

## PERSONAL SUPPORT

Accept the fact that after the crisis seems to have passed and in your judgment it seems that things should be getting back to normal, your child may still be having difficulty adjusting. They may need to talk about their feelings long after you have lost interest in listening. They may still feel traumatized even though, from your perspective, they should be fully recovered or functional. Keep in mind that the psychological after-effects can last for years.

