

## What is child sexual abuse?

\* Child abuse is a crime. It happens when an adult or someone bigger, or older than a child, involves a child in sexual activity by using his or her power over a child, or taking advantage of a child's trust.

\* Often trick, bribes, or threats and sometimes physical force are used to make a child participate in the activity.

\* Child sexual abuse includes a wide range of activity which can include exhibitionism, fondling, oral sex and intercourse.

## If you suspect child sexual abuse

Call:

1800 675 598

Department Human Services

## What help is available?

### For more information on:

- \* child abuse and its prevention,
- \* personal safety resources for children

### Contact:

Mallee Sexual Assault Unit  
Suite 1, 144-146 Lime Ave, Mildura

Tel: (03) 5025 5400

Fax: (03) 5025 5432

Email: [info@msau-mdvs.org.au](mailto:info@msau-mdvs.org.au)

Mallee Sexual Assault Unit  
14 Beveridge St, Swan Hill

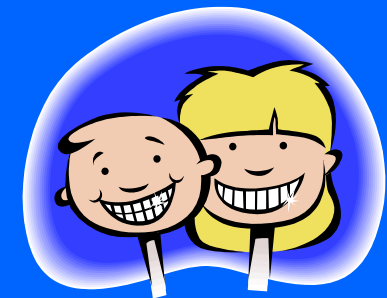
Tel: (03) 5033 1786

Email: [msaush@iinet.net.au](mailto:msaush@iinet.net.au)



# Sexual abuse

## Keeping Children Safe...



Mallee Sexual Assault Unit

## The facts

- ⇒ Many children experience some form of sexual abuse.
- ⇒ In the majority of cases, the offender is someone known to the child.
- ⇒ Child sexual abuse occurs in all kinds of families.
- ⇒ Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused.

### Why is prevention important?

Parents are not always able to protect their children 24 hours a day. Children are often misinformed about when and where sexual abuse might occur and who might abuse them. It is important that children have accurate information and are taught skills to keep themselves safe.

### What are personal safety programs?

Children are taught rules about traffic, fire, water and safety from an early age. Personal safety programs are designed to help children learn the rules for keeping themselves safe.

*In the Mallee region the most widely used program in kindergartens and schools is the Personal Safety Success Program (PSST). Ask about this program at your child's school or kindergarten.*

### What do children need to know?

To help children protect themselves from sexual abuse they need to know and understand the principles of personal safety. Most people find it difficult to talk to children, especially young children about how to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Some ideas:

⇒ Include the topic in a discussion about general safety - eg. Water, roads and fire.

Use the correct names of the parts of the body when talking to children about personal safety. This teaches children to be comfortable with their body.

### Some personal safety hints.

Teach children about touch. Most sexual abuse involves inappropriate touching or fondling of the child by the adult. Children need to know how to identify when and how people can touch them and when and how they can touch others.

Teach children to trust their feelings. Children have a keen natural sense when something is amiss. They must learn to trust all their feelings, whether good, bad or confusing.

Teach children when to say no to adults Children are taught to be polite and obey adults. However, they must be given permission to say NO to an adult if they need to protect themselves.

Teach children that they own their body

⇒ Children quickly learn the meaning of "mine", as it applies to toys, bikes, etc. The right to make the same claim about their body and to decide when they want to be touched, and by whom, should be established early.

Teach children to leave uncomfortable situations. Children need to feel safe, so should be taught to remove themselves as quickly as possible from any person who makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Teach children about inappropriate secrets

Much sexual abuse depends on the child being persuaded, threatened or coerced into not telling about the abuse. Children need to learn that secrets which frighten or hurt them should not be kept.

Teach children about support persons

⇒ Children should be helped to identify a number of people to whom they can turn to if they are touched inappropriately ways. They should be taught to expect adults will act to protect them and to keep on telling until they find someone who does.

