



Attorney General's Office of Victim Services

Tucson Main: (520) 628-6456 • Phoenix Main: (602) 542-4911

Child Physical & Sexual Abuse

Child abuse is an unfortunate common occurrence in the United States. It is important that we, as adults, act as advocates for children, as they are unable to advocate for themselves. There are two forms of child abuse: physical and sexual. There are signs of both that can indicate that there is abuse occurring.

Signs of Physical Abuse

- Withdrawal
- Changes in behavior
- Depression, anxiety, loss of self-confidence
- Lack of supervision
- Absences from school
- Unexplained injuries
- Untreated medical conditions

Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Age-inappropriate sexual behavior or knowledge
- Pain in genital area
- Sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy
- Sleeping disorders
- Difficulty with urination
- Stomach aches
- Unexplained bruises

It is important, both to the children and to the other family members this may affect, to not have any embarrassment or reluctance in discussing this serious matter.

What You Can Do

- *Keep your initial reaction neutral.* The reactions of people close to the child are important factors in determining how the child will cope with their victimization. Provide the child with reassurance, comfort, affection and consideration. Be open to your child's questions and feelings.
- *Hide your negative feelings.* Watch your comments both to your child and any that your child may overhear. Demands for revenge or threats about the offender may confuse or frighten your child. Be careful not to make your child feel like he or she is "ruined" because of their abuse.
- *Don't add to your child's guilt.* This is not the time for a lecture. Avoid accusatory statements. Keep in mind that your child did not ask to be victimized. Do not punish your child or make him or her feel responsible for the abuse. Also, do not blame yourself. The offender is the only person responsible.
- *Be careful not to create fear.* Let your child know in simple terms that what the offender did was wrong. If your child exhibits inappropriate behaviors (sexual, rage, etc.), help them understand what is and is not appropriate.
- *Respect your child's privacy.* Whom you and your child tell about what happened is strictly up to you and your child. Many families find that it is helpful for immediate family to be told so they can provide needed support and understanding. It is also important to report the incident to the law enforcement agency in your area.
- *Consider seeking professional help.* Therapists who specialize in helping child victims of physical or sexual abuse are available. Use resources later in this document to help find someone to talk to. You may be eligible for Victim Compensation to reimburse you for any counseling; consult your advocate for more information, or visit <http://azcjc.gov/ACJC.Web/victim/VictComp.aspx>.

What We Can Do

If your case is being investigated or prosecuted by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, the Office of Victim Services (OVS) may assist you and your child in several ways to cope with the emotional ramifications of victimization, the complexities of criminal investigations, as well as the criminal justice system.

To assist your family during investigation and/or prosecution, an OVS advocate will be assigned to your case. This advocate will update you, by phone or in writing, about the status of the case. You will be informed of scheduled court proceedings, the outcome of those hearings, and your rights in the judicial process.

Your advocate will also be an important ally in helping your child. It is likely that your child will have to be interviewed by investigators and/or prosecutors in order to build a case. The advocate can help in coordinating interviews and meetings with investigators and prosecutors, as well as accompany your family to these interviews or court proceedings.

Your advocate is also available to provide additional resources to you and your child.

Resources to Help You

National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

Your Life Your Voice

1-800-448-3000

Childhelp

<https://www.childhelp.org/>

DCS hotline

1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445)