

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY NON-OFFENDING PARENTS

- 1. Was this my child's fault?**
No. Sexual abuse/assault is never the fault of the victim.
- 2. How could I let this happen?**
Perpetrators are very clever at how they target, groom and isolate a child for abuse. They are devious, manipulative and deceptive. It is not your fault that someone else abused your child.
- 3. How will the sexual abuse affect my child?**
Children respond differently. The child's developmental level will affect the impact of sexual abuse (see the handout, "Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse"). The most important thing you can do to minimize the impact of the abuse is to let the child know you believe them, that you are sorry you were not there or did not know, that the abuse is not their fault and they are not in trouble, and that you will do everything possible to protect them.
- 4. What will people say about my child's abuse?**
That will partly depend on how you choose to share this information with others and what you share. You and your child have a right to confidentiality.
- 5. Did my child enjoy the sex?**
Children (and adults) sometimes respond sexually to the stimulation during abuse. They may like the intimacy with the abuser. This does not mean they enjoyed or wanted the abuse.
- 6. Why is my child so angry at me?**
Anger is one emotional reaction a child may have in response to a sexual assault. They may be angry that nobody knew about the abuse or did anything to stop it, or did not believe them.
- 7. Is my child at risk of an STI or other medical problem?**
Possibly, but treatment can help. A good medical exam by a trained professional is always recommended.
- 8. Will the abuse affect my other children?**
Children are very sensitive to the adults around them so they usually know when something is wrong. Talk openly and honestly with all the children. Provide support and reassurance.
- 9. Will my child have sexual problems?**
With support and education, children can recover from sexual abuse. Sexually abused children do not have to be damaged for life.
- 10. How much should we talk about the abuse?**
Follow the child's lead on this. Do not push the child to talk if they don't want to, but don't avoid the issue if the child wants to talk.

11. Should we tell anyone outside the family?

That should be decided by the child. Who, what, when, where and how should be considered, as well as possible responses.

12. Will our family ever be normal and happy again?

Yes. Individuals and families can heal from the effects of abuse. Confronting this issue honestly is important. Seeking support can help.