

You can help keep kids safe

Keeping kids safe - it isn't only the job of parents, teachers and coaches. It isn't only the responsibility of those who work with or raise children.

It's every adult's responsibility to keep the youngest members of our community safe. That includes you.

That's why we should all understand the warning signs of child abuse and what to do if you suspect it may be happening. Here are a few tips:

Watch for warning signs.

There are four types of child abuse, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment. But often, a child experiences more than one type.

Children may or may not display signs of abuse. And sometimes, these signs in isolation may not mean abuse is happening.

There are physical signs of abuse like bruises, burns and other questionable marks. But behavioral changes are also a huge red flag.

"When kids have a big swing in behavior, it indicates that something is happening," explains Angie Kendall, director of development and communications at the Child Abuse Council.

This something could be a variety of things in the child, family or environment. But these behavioral changes can also be signs of abuse.

Listen when kids tell you something.

When a child discloses abuse, it can be difficult for an adult to hear.

And it's not easy for children to tell someone about abuse. They may be scared, feel ashamed, or they may not know what they are experiencing is wrong. They also may be threatened.

"The average sexual predator has 120 separate acts before they are caught," Angie explains. "They are good at not getting caught."

There seems to be a presumption that kids would lie about abuse, but that's very rarely the case. If they do tell you about abuse, the best thing to do is believe them.

Know how to report suspected abuse.

Do you worry about accusing someone of abuse? Are you concerned about getting involved? Does it



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Does it seem like too much work?

In the end, keeping kids safe means we all need to be willing to report suspected abuse. Whenever you suspect abuse or neglect, call the child abuse hotline in your state immediately.

"A phone call isn't an accusation, but a request for more information," Angie says.

Making this phone call is really a request that a professional look into the situation for the sake of the child and family.

In Iowa, call the State of Iowa Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-362-2178. In Illinois, call the State of Illinois Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-2873. If the child is immediate danger, dial 911.

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Keeping kids safe is a responsibility we should all take seriously.

Identifying child abuse and neglect and knowing how to report suspected abuse is an important first step.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog 10/19/15. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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