

7 Steps to Protecting Our Children

The Arkansas Children's Trust Fund is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. While our focus tends to be on strengthening young families in the hope of reducing physical abuse, we understand that child sexual abuse is a very serious problem with consequences that affect our entire society.

A Child's Safety is an Adult's Responsibility

Children are often taught how to keep themselves safe from sexual abuse—and that's important for them to learn—but it's no substitute for adult responsibility. Adults are responsible for children's safety. That includes how we prevent, recognize and respond to child sexual abuse. Adults should be taking proactive steps to protect children from this significant risk.

Step 1: Learn the Facts

- It is highly likely that you know a child who has been or is being abused. Experts estimate that **1 in 4 girls** and **1 in 6 boys** are sexually abused before their 18th birthdays. This means that in any classroom or neighborhood full of children, there are children who are silently bearing the burden of sexual abuse.
- Most child victims never report the abuse.
- **30-40%** of children are abused by family members. As many as **60%** are abused by people the family trusts—abusers frequently try to form a trusting relationship with parents.
- People who abuse children look and act just like every one else. In fact, they often go out of their way to appear trustworthy to gain access to children.
- Those who sexually abuse children are drawn to settings where they can gain easy access to children, such as sports leagues, faith centers, clubs, and schools.

Step 2: Minimize Opportunity

- Understand that abusers often become friendly with potential victims and their families, enjoying family activities, earning trust, and gaining time alone with children.
- Think carefully about the safety of any one-adult/one-child situations. Choose group situations when possible.
- Think carefully about the safety of situations in which older youth have access to younger children. Make sure that multiple adults are present who can supervise.
- Set an example by personally avoiding one-adult/one-child

situations with children other than your own.

- Create and lobby for policies that reduce or eliminate one-adult/one-child situations in all youth-serving organizations, such as faith groups, sports teams, and school clubs. These policies should ensure that all activities can be interrupted and observed at any time.
- When your child is in a one-on-one situation with an adult, follow steps such as getting specific details about the planned outing, dropping in unexpectedly, and observing your child's mood following the interaction. Trust your instincts.

- Be direct. Inform adults who care for children that you and your child are educated about child sexual abuse and are prepared to discuss it.

Step 3: Talk About It

- Understand why children are afraid to tell. They may be coached by their abuser to feel special, keep a secret or play a game. Alternately, they may be threatened or made to feel ashamed, confused, or scared.
- Know how children communicate. They may tell part of what happened, or tell that it happened to someone else, to gauge adult reaction. If this reaction is anything less than positive, they may be wary of telling anyone again.
- Talk openly with your child. Start early and talk often. Teach them words that help them discuss sex comfortably and how to tell when something is wrong.
- Talk to other adults about child sexual abuse. This raises the consciousness of your community and influences their choices about child safety. It provides support and information to someone whose child may be experiencing child sexual abuse and does not know what to do.
- **Talking openly about child sexual abuse lets potential abusers know that you are paying attention.**

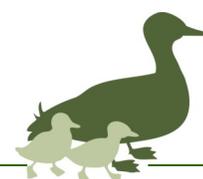
Step 4: Stay Alert

- Learn the signs. They may be physical, emotional, sexual. Again, trust your instincts if something seems wrong.

Step 5: Make a Plan

Learn where to go, whom to call, and how to react when a child discloses abuse:

1. *Realities, not trust, should influence your decisions regarding children.*
2. *Eliminating or reducing one-adult/one-child situations dramatically lowers the risk of sexual abuse for children.*
3. *Good communication may decrease a child's vulnerability to sexual abuse.*
4. *Trust your instincts. Act on suspicions.*
5. *The cycle of abuse can be stopped. It's the responsibility of all adults to stop it.*



PROGRAM NEWS

Children's Trust Fund Receives Grant Blue & You Foundation to Fund Safety Baby Showers

The Arkansas Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board has been awarded a grant from the Blue and You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas. The Trust Fund will receive \$73,600 to launch a series of Safety Baby Showers around the state.

Safety Baby Showers provide baby safety education to young expectant mothers in a traditional shower format, complete with games and prizes. Participants then receive a home safety kit to take with them.

The showers will be hosted by the THRIVE home visiting programs with assistance from the

Trust Fund. The showers may be used to generate community support and referrals for the home visiting programs. Parents enrolled in a THRIVE program will then receive follow up information and support from their home visitor.



Future enrollees in a program will also benefit from having a home visitor who has been trained in basic baby safety education. This further supports the goal of the THRIVE program, which is to provide education and resources to support healthy families.

The Safety Baby Showers program will kick off with a training of trainers in early 2012.

APEN Celebrates Work of Parent Educators



Approximately 650 people participated in the 13th Annual Arkansas Conference for Parent Education and Involvement in Hot Springs, AR in October.

The conference featured presentations on the use of technology in parenting education and on tracing the roots of violence in children from keynote speakers Susan Walker and Robin Karr-Morse, as well as numerous workshops and seminars from local presenters. Two awards were also presented in conjunction with the conference.

Healthy Connections, Inc. of Mena received the Calvin Johnson Award. This award is given to a group or organization that successfully engage parents, schools and communities in creating an environment where all children have the opportunity to thrive. Healthy Connections achieves this through its many successful programs and partnerships.

Shirley Smothers of the Harrison School District received the Parent Educator of the Year Award. This award is given to an individual who specializes in providing parent education. Through her work as a school-based human service worker, Ms. Smothers teaches families how to access resources they can use to support their growth and learning.

Information about the next conference will be available early in the new year.

Trust Funds Needs Local Councils

The State Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) is required by law to utilize Certified Local Councils when making decisions about Children's Trust Fund grants. Local Councils may review and recommend new programs from their community to receive funding, or they may serve as an advisory board for an existing program. Either way, programs receiving funds from the CANPB, whether from the Children's Trust Fund or other funds, should have a relationship with their Local Council.

Local Councils consist of representation from the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, local law enforcement, the local public education system, and the general citizenry. They are required to "certify" each year with the CANPB in order to receive information about funding and other resources.

Existing Local Councils will receive information from the CANPB about how to recertify. If your county does not have a Local Council, but would like to establish one, please contact the Children's Trust Fund staff at 501-664-2227 or arkansasctf@arkansasctf.org.

P A R E N T I N G P A G E

Reduce Holiday Stress

The holidays are upon us. And while that means lots of fun and joy with family and friends, the holiday festivities can be stressful and overwhelming for kids—and their parents. To help you get through this season successfully, remember these tips:

Schedule—Decrease holiday stress by planning in advance with your kids.

- **DO** make time in your schedule to talk about the holidays with your kids. Put it in your agenda, if that's what it takes to set aside time. Or bring it up in the car when you're together. This helps create a dialogue between you and your child and lets them know they can speak with you about anything that's bothering them.
- **DO** make a schedule of upcoming holiday events. Mark events boldly and post it prominently on the fridge, for example, so kids will know clearly what's coming up and what to expect. Surprises may be overwhelming at this time of year.
- **DON'T** over schedule. It's important that you share and enjoy the holidays, but do so in ways that everyone can appreciate without becoming overwhelmed.

Inform—Talk with your kids about holiday problems.

- **DON'T** leave your kids in the dark. If your holidays are going to be impacted by financial challenges, for example, let the kids know in advance. This will take pressure off you to provide more than you can comfortably, and it puts kids in the loop. Also, try to make the holidays fun despite the problems you may be facing. If you're cash-strapped, throw a present-making day, so children won't feel bad about not being able to buy you or their siblings something.

Listen—Be available to talk with your kids about possible holiday stress.

- **DO** ask what their expectations or worries are for the holidays; it could be they're concerned about a classmate who won't be getting any gifts or are worried about splitting their holidays between two homes, due to divorce or separation. They'll welcome the chance to talk about it with you.
- **DON'T** grill your children or pepper them with questions about how they're feeling. It doesn't open the door to discussion and dialogue. Let them know you're interested and available when they need or want to talk to you. They will come to you when they're ready.

Most importantly, remember that the holidays are meant to be shared and enjoyed. Good planning and communication about all aspects of the season, even those that may be less positive, can make it less stressful and more memorable for everyone.

New Traditions

The holidays are great time to share family traditions and rituals. These traditions may include stories, decorations, food, gatherings, service to others, or more. If your family is interested in creating a new ritual, try keeping a family notebook.

On New Year's Eve, have every family member write down or draw pictures of their goals and hopes for the coming year. Be sure to include family goals. Then decide what each of you can do to accomplish those goals. Next year, review the notebook and consider items "done", "do over" or "do again".

A family notebook will help you make and realize plans for the new year. Letting each person know that what they do is noticed and appreciated is empowering, and helps everyone understand how they are making it possible to accomplish both family and individual goals.



A Season for Nonviolence

The holidays are generally considered a time of

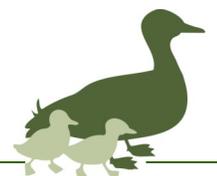
peace and goodwill. Those interested in promoting this goodwill beyond the holidays might be interested in A Season for Nonviolence.

The "season" is a national 64-day campaign dedicated to demonstrating the power of nonviolence to transform our lives and communities. It begins with the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on January 30 and ends with the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4.

During the Season of Nonviolence, participants are encouraged to adopt one daily practice each day for 64 days. This daily practice encourages each person to make conscious decisions and take specific actions toward becoming a nonviolent individual with the power to influence nonviolence in others.

The daily practices are explained at www.64-days.org. They include a weekly guide to practicing nonviolent behavior and making more peaceful and compassionate choices. Each section begins with a brief explanation of the focus for the week, followed by daily practices. The daily practices are further broken down for adults, teens and children, with specific actions for that day. You can also register for your daily practices to be sent to you via email.

Nonviolence is not just refraining from violence, it is choosing to react in a way that demonstrates compassion, understanding, and respect. It takes self-awareness, courage and practice. It is a practice that has the power to transform. It is a practice you can begin in your own family.



Make a Plan, cont...

- Don't overreact. Your response can be a powerful influence on a vulnerable child.
- Offer support but don't over do it. Praise the child's courage for telling but do not ask leading questions that may alter his or her memory of details.
- Assure him or her that you will do all you can to protect him, but do not make promises or threats about what will happen to him or his abuser.
- Know the legal requirements and procedures for reporting child abuse in Arkansas. Understand that it is not enough to report the abuse to a parent, leader or supervisor. It is your obligation to contact the statewide hotline and report what you know/suspect and to **follow up** to see that action is taken.

Step 6: Act on Suspicions

You may be faced with a situation where you suspect abuse but don't have any proof.

- Talk to the parents of the child (if they are not the abusers) or contact the hotline for guidance.
- Have the courage to report the suspected abuse. You will not get in trouble if your suspicions turn out to be unfounded.

Step 7: Get Involved

- Donate time and resources to organizations that fight abuse, such as prevention programs, crisis shelters and programs, and children's advocacy centers.
- Use your voice and your vote to make your community a safer place for children. Become an advocate for programs and policies that protect children.
- Break the cycle of silence. Find the courage to talk about the trauma of child sexual abuse. Understand the consequences of not discussing this very real problem. Teach others what they can do to stop child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse is a complex problem. Teaching children about personal safety, including sexual safety, is important. But it is unrealistic to think that a young child can take responsibility for fending off sexual advances by an adult. It is also unrealistic to think that child sexual abuse can't happen to you or someone you know. The facts show otherwise, and it is up to us as adults to do a better job of preventing, reporting and stopping child abuse in all its forms.

The 7 Steps to Protecting Our Children were developed by the non-profit organization Darkness to Light. To learn more about Darkness to Light and the additional prevention resources and tools they offer, visit www.d2l.org.

RESOURCES

NOTABLE DATES

Fun and interesting dates to plan a parent group meeting or family activity around:

December 5	Bathtub Party Day
December 7	Letter Writing Day
December 21	National Flashlight Day
December 31	Make Up Your Mind Day
January 11	Step in a Puddle & Splash Your Friend Day
January 16-20	Hunt for Happiness Week
January 18	Winnie the Pooh Day
January 25	Opposite Day
February 16	Do a Grouch a Favor Day

Free Language and Literacy Materials

Free parent-child literacy activities in seven languages, including English and Spanish, are now available by download from Washington Learning Systems.

These materials include home and community activities for adults and young children (birth to five) that encourage early language and literacy development. They are appropriate for children with disabilities as well as children who are developing typically.

Each of the activities includes an activity description, and hints for making the activity fun and developmentally appropriate. An activity checklist helps parents and caregivers notice their children's skills, and also cues adults to examine and grow their own interactions with children.

To download materials go to <http://www.wlearning.com> and click on the button that says "Literacy Resources". You will need to create a logon account using your email address and a password.

The materials, which were developed with support from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, may be copied and distributed, just not sold.

HEALTHY FAMILIES
Get it right from the start



Arkansas Children's Trust Fund

415 North McKinley Suite 462
Little Rock, AR
501.664.2227

www.arkansasctf.org