



Protecting & Empowering Boys

A Guide for Parents



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(907) 276-7279

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(907) 276-7273 or
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UNDERSTANDING MALE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE



This guide aims to raise awareness, dispel myths, and provide practical steps to protect boys from sexual abuse. By understanding the issue and knowing how to respond, we can create a safer environment for all children.

Sexual abuse involves any sexual activity with a child, including touching, exposure, or exploitation.

Despite common misconceptions, boys are also at risk.

Abuse can be committed by adults or other youth. It's never the child's fault.

Child sexual abuse isn't always easy to spot and some survivors may not exhibit obvious warning signs. The perpetrator could be someone you've known a long time or trust, which may make it even harder to notice.

TYPES OF ABUSE

- Contact Abuse: Physical contact, such as touching or penetration
- Non-Contact Abuse: Exposure to sexual acts or materials, online exploitation, or verbal harassment



**According to lin6.org,
1 in 6 boys will experience
sexual abuse before
turning 18.**

Child sexual assault in Alaska is almost six times the national average. (UAA Justice Center, 2015 survey)

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Creating a Safe Environment

- **Supervision:** Know where your child is, who they're with, and who else may be around.
- **Open Communication:** Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and experiences.
- **Education:** Teach your child about body autonomy and what respectful behavior looks like.
- **Healthy Boundaries:** Help your child understand that just because someone is familiar doesn't always mean they're safe. Trust should be earned through actions, not assumed based on relationships.

Online Safety

- **Monitor Online Activity:** Keep an eye on your child's internet use.
- **Privacy Settings:** Use privacy settings on social media.
- **Teach Safe Online Behavior:** Explain the importance of not sharing personal information online.



Remember, support is available, and you are not alone in this journey.

Call STAR if you would like some guidance on starting the conversation.

Call (907) 276-7279 and ask to speak with an educator.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

By staying informed, creating a safe environment, and knowing how to respond, you can help ensure your child's safety and well-being.

STAR PREVENTION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

STAR's Personal Safety curriculum is approved by the Anchorage School District for grades Pre-K - 12, and is intended to serve as a supplement to The Great Body Shop lessons on personal body safety and harm prevention.

In tailored presentations for younger students, participants learn important information about topics such as:

- "It's MY body, and I like it!"
- The three kinds of touches: Safe, Ouch, and Secret
- The difference between a Secret Touch and a Clean and Healthy Touch
- The Personal Safety NO-GO-TELL and who to tell
- How to identify Trusted Adults at home, school, and in the community
- The difference between tattling and telling. Tattling is about getting someone else in trouble. Telling or reporting is about keeping someone safe.

These lessons provide students with a better understanding of safe vs. unsafe behaviors and touches. Additionally, STAR seeks to provide a common language for students and identify who to ask for help when it is needed.



If you would like to request a STAR presentation for your child's school, contact our Prevention and Education Team:

(907) 276-7279 or
educator@staralaska.org.



TALKING WITH BOYS ABOUT PERSONAL BODY SAFETY

Starting conversations with children about sexual abuse can be challenging, but it is essential. Use age-appropriate language and reassure boys that it's safe to talk about their feelings. Listen without judgment and validate their experiences.

Start Early

- **Age-Appropriate Conversations:** Begin talking about body autonomy and personal boundaries at a young age.
- **Use Simple Language:** Explain concepts in a way that your child can understand.

Teach Body Autonomy

- **My Body, My Rules:** Emphasize that your child has control over their own body, and other children have control over their own bodies, too.
- **No Means No:** Teach your child that they have the right to say no to any touch that makes them uncomfortable.

Encourage Open Communication

- **Create a Safe Space:** Make sure your child knows they can talk to you about anything without fear of punishment or judgment.
- **Listen and Support:** Always listen to your child and support them if they come to you with concerns.



RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

Signs of abuse can be physical, emotional, or behavioral, and often vary by age. No single sign confirms abuse, but patterns or sudden changes may signal a need for concern.

- Change in hygiene, such as refusing to bathe or bathing excessively
- Development of phobias
- Exhibiting signs of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Engages in substance use or experimentation with drugs or alcohol, especially if it seems sudden, secretive, or out of character.
- Expresses suicidal thoughts, especially in adolescents
- Has trouble in school, such as absences or drops in grades
- Increased aggression or unusual withdrawal from social situations
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviors
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Overly protective and concerned for siblings, or assumes a caretaker role
- Returns to regressive behaviors, such as thumb sucking
- Runs away from home or school
- Self-harms
- Shrinks away or seems threatened by physical contact
- Unexplained gifts or money (may indicate grooming or coercion)

Parents:

If your child has been sexually abused, **it is not your fault**. Abusers often manipulate and deceive to gain access to children. Focus on supporting your child and seeking the necessary help and resources.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

Hearing a child disclose abuse is one of the most difficult and emotional moments a parent or caregiver can face. It's natural to feel overwhelmed, heartbroken, or unsure of what to say or do next. But your response in that moment—and in the days that follow—can make a profound difference in your child's healing journey.

Stay Calm

Your child needs to feel safe and supported.

Listen

Let them talk without interrupting or judging.

Believe Them

Affirm that you believe and support them.

Reassure

Remind them it's not their fault and they're not alone.

Don't Push for Details

Leave these kinds of questions to professionals.

Report It

Contact child protection and law enforcement.

Get Help

Find a therapist experienced in trauma.

Care for Yourself

Seek support so you can stay strong for your child.

Supportive Things to Say:

- "I believe you."
- "You did the right thing by telling me."
- "I'm so sorry this happened to you."
- "It's not your fault."
- "You're very brave."
- "I'm here for you, and I'm going to help keep you safe."
- "You can talk to me anytime."

TYPES OF DISCLOSURES

Children may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, and not all of them are direct or obvious. Recognizing the different types of disclosures—direct, indirect, disguised, “strings attached,” and accidental—can help adults respond with sensitivity and support. Each type reflects the child’s emotional state, fears, and level of trust.

Direct Disclosure

The child clearly states what happened. Example: “My uncle touched me in a way I didn’t like.”

Indirect Disclosure

The child hints at abuse without naming it. Example: “I don’t want to go to Grandma’s house anymore. It makes my stomach hurt.”

Disguised Disclosure

The child talks about “someone else” or uses hypothetical language. Example: “What if a kid’s coach did something bad to them?”

Disclosure with Strings Attached

The child shares information but asks for secrecy or sets conditions. Example: “I’ll tell you something, but you have to promise not to tell anyone.”

Accidental Disclosure

The child reveals abuse unintentionally, often during play or conversation. Example: While playing with dolls, a child says, “This one has to hide because the daddy hurts her at night.”



WHY BOYS MAY DELAY REPORTING ABUSE

Boys often face unique barriers that can delay or prevent them from disclosing abuse. These challenges are shaped by emotional, psychological, and societal pressures, including:

- Fear of not being believed or being blamed for what happened.
- Shame or embarrassment, especially if the abuse involved physical arousal.
- Grooming by the abuser can create emotional bonds, confusion, or a sense of loyalty that makes disclosure difficult.
- Parents or caregivers may also be groomed by the abuser, leading them to trust the individual and overlook warning signs, which can further isolate the child.
- Threats/manipulation by the abuser.
- Cultural expectations that discourage boys from showing vulnerability or seeking help.
- Lack of awareness or language.
- Confusion about masculinity or sexual identity, particularly if the abuser was male.
- Lack of understanding that what happened was abuse, especially at a young age.
- Fear of retaliation from the abuser or consequences for their family.
- Concern about being labeled or stigmatized, especially among peers.

Where Safety Meets Support: Helping Boys Speak Out

Creating environments where boys feel safe, supported, and heard is essential to helping them come forward and begin healing. By fostering open communication and unconditional support, we empower boys to speak out and reclaim their sense of self and move forward with strength and dignity.

ENDING STIGMA

Cultural myths like “boys can’t be victims” or “they should be tough” contribute to harmful silence. Boys may fear being disbelieved, judged, or seen as weak. Some may even feel shame or confusion about their abuse, especially if it was perpetrated by someone they trusted.

Educate Yourself and Others

- **Learn About Sexual Abuse:** Understand the facts and dispel myths.
- **Share Information:** Educate friends, family, and community members.

Support Survivors

- **Listen Without Judgment:** Provide a safe space for survivors.
- **Believe and Validate:** Believe survivors and validate their feelings.
- **Encourage Seeking Help:** Support survivors in accessing professional help.

Challenge Harmful Attitudes

- **Speak Out:** Challenge harmful attitudes and stereotypes.
- **Promote Empathy:** Show your child what healthy relationships look like. Respect their boundaries and encourage them to respect others.
- **Advocate for Change:** Support policies and initiatives that protect children and support survivors.

Sexual abuse can happen to any child, regardless of gender. Yet, when boys are victims, silence often surrounds their pain. As a parent, you play a crucial role in breaking this silence and creating a safe, supportive environment where boys feel seen, heard, and protected.

HOW STAR CAN HELP



(907) 276-7273
(800) 478-8999
staralaska.com
star@staralaska.org



SUPPORT SERVICES

- 24-hour crisis line support and information
- Immediate crisis support, reporting options, and information about victims' rights
- Medical and law enforcement accompaniment
- 1-on-1 advocacy sessions
- Legal Advocacy, including court accompaniment
- Information and referrals to community resources

FREE TRAINING FOR ADULTS, PRESENTED BY STAR:



Visit www.staralaska.com/darkness-to-light

Or contact us about our current training schedule:
star@staralaska.org or call (907) 276-7279

MORE RESOURCES

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

[1in6](#)

[1n6.org](#)

[Zero Abuse Project](#)

[zeroabuseproject.org](#)

[Men Healing](#)

[menhealing.org](#)

[RAINN](#)

(Rape, Abuse & Incest
National Network)

(800) 656-4673

Online chat

[online.rainn.org](#)

[National Child Abuse Hotline](#)

(800) 422-4453

IN ALASKA

[Southcentral Foundation](#)

Family Wellness Warriors

Nu'iju

[southcentralfoundation.com/](#)

[family-wellness-warriors-](#)

[nuiju](#)



[Alaska CARES](#)

(907) 561-8301

Alaska CARES is a
Children's Advocacy Center
(CAC) that conducts child
abuse response and
evaluation services.

[State of Alaska](#)

Office of Children's
Services

(800) 478-4444

Submit a report online:

[dfcs.alaska.gov/ocs/](#)

[ReportChildAbuse@alaska.gov](#)

[Alaska State](#)

[Troopers/Department of
Public Safety](#)

If an emergency, dial 911.

Statewide: 907-451-5100

[Anchorage Police](#)

[Department](#)

If an emergency, dial 911

Non-emergency: 311

DEDICATION



This booklet is lovingly dedicated to Ryan Michael Gray (Anchorage, AK) whose courageous story reminds us that sexual abuse can devastate anyone – even those who appear strong, successful, and joyful. Ryan's life reminds us that behind every smile may lie a story of silent suffering—and that boys, too, can be victims of sexual abuse.

May this booklet, through education, compassion, and steadfast awareness, stand as a living tribute to Ryan. May his memory help safeguard others and serve as a beacon of hope, awareness, and change for all those who have endured the unimaginable.

May Ryan's story inspire every adult entrusted with the care of a child to listen deeply, act compassionately, and teach children and adults that speaking out is never wrong, and that help is always possible.

Dawn, Kevin, and Connor Gray

This project was made possible by:



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COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

RYAN M. GRAY MEMORIAL FUND
ryangraymemorial.org