



smalltalk
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

Healthy Boundaries Program at Small Talk Frequently Asked Questions

“What is the Healthy Boundaries Program at Small Talk? Who is it for?”

The Healthy Boundaries Program is a treatment program designed specifically to support children with sexual behavior problems and their parents/caregivers. It can be scary and confusing for parents/caregivers to know how to manage and address their child's sexual behaviors appropriately – Healthy Boundaries is intended to provide clear guidance and support for children and their parents who are navigating these issues.

“What does Healthy Boundaries include?”

The Healthy Boundaries program has two components – Assessment and Treatment. Assessments happen first. They are done first to figure out the needs of the child and/or family – including whether treatment would be appropriate and helpful for your child. An assessment is a scheduled meeting, either online or in person, where a therapist will meet with you and your child to find out more about what is going on and make recommendations for treatment and/or next steps. Treatment is therapy – it is offered to kids to help address concerning/problematic sexual behaviors, as well as provide support to their parents/caregivers. Treatment is designed to fit the individual, unique needs of the child and caregiver(s).

“What children qualify for Healthy Boundaries?”

This program is designed for children between the ages of 3-12 who are residents of Ingham County or Eaton County, and who have demonstrated concerning, inappropriate, and/or problem sexual behaviors. If you are unsure whether a child may meet these criteria, we can help – please call Lindsey Power at 517-999-8284. She will help walk you through.

“Does treatment for children with sexual behavior problems work?”

Yes. Children with sexual behavior problems generally respond well to outpatient treatment. There are evidence-based treatment models/approaches that support the development of appropriate interpersonal boundaries, healthy attitudes toward sexuality and sexual development, and fostering supportive communication between children and their caregivers to help address sexual behaviors in a constructive way. When children demonstrate concerning sexual behaviors, it does not define them forever! Similarly to other types of behavior problems children have, sexual behavior problems can be addressed in therapy and with the support of their parent/caregiver.

“What are the rates/fee for this program?”

This program is provided free of charge for the public/community members. Small Talk will not ask for any insurance information.

“I know a child who would be a good fit for this program – what should I do? How do referrals work?”

We recommend that you share our information with the child's parent/caregiver first as a first step. Services usually work best when a parent is informed, on board, and know what to expect. Parents are welcome to call us for more information, or we can reach out to them to connect. We welcome referrals/inquiries from parents/caregivers, family members/friends, members of our Multidisciplinary Team (law enforcement, DHHS workers, other service providers), School Social Workers/faculty, and others.

If a referral comes from Law Enforcement or Child Protective Services, Small Talk will attempt to contact the caregiver up to two times to schedule an appointment. If the caregiver informs that they are not interested in participating in an assessment, the therapist will notify the referral source.

“Am I required/mandated to participate in Healthy Boundaries if I don’t think it is a good fit for my child?”

No. Healthy Boundaries is offered to the public and community members in general, but it is not required or mandatory. For families who participate in as assessment, Healthy Boundaries treatment may be recommended as an intervention that could be beneficial for your child; however, it is your right to decide whether your child participates.

“I’m a parent of a child who has sexual behavior problems, but I’m worried about what people will think of me/my child.”

Please rest assured that you will not be met with judgment or disrespect of any kind. Parents who are dealing with the sexual behaviors of their child(ren) commonly feel afraid to reach out for help because they have all kinds of worries. Parents sometimes worry that they, or their child, will be looked down upon or judged negatively; sometimes parents worry that others will think they somehow caused their child’s behavior because they did something wrong, or because they should have noticed signs sooner. We understand there are many reasons why children demonstrate sexual behaviors, and we are not here to assign blame. Small Talk staff will welcome you and your child with the intent to help you manage this issue collaboratively. It is your right to be treated respectfully, which is our promise.

“What happens to my child if they tell someone that they have sexually acted out toward another child? What happens if they say they have had sexual abuse happen to them?”

During the assessment, the therapist will ask you and your child questions about what may have led to their sexual behaviors. If a child discloses that they have been sexually abused by someone, or that they have sexually acted out toward another child, this information may need to be reported by the therapist. The therapist working with you will be there to help navigate next steps to help you know what to expect. The reason for this is that any/all suspected child abuse must be reported by law. If sexual abuse that gets disclosed during an assessment has already been reported/investigated by the time of the assessment, it may not need to be reported again (this is determined by the therapist). Any questions about this process are welcome and encouraged.

“What are you doing about COVID-19 safety measures for this program?”

Services are currently being offered via online telehealth. Assessments and treatment are done virtually, by meeting online on a HIPAA-compliant platform, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Doxy. The option to meet in person in a counseling office setting will be offered for families in the future, when appropriate safety measures can be confirmed.

“Who is the contact person for more information about Healthy Boundaries?”

Lindsey Power, LMSW is the Clinical Director/Therapist who facilitates this program. She can be reached directly at 517-999-8284, or by email at lpower@smalltalkcac.org.

“What can I expect when I reach out about services?”

You will speak with Lindsey Power, Clinical Director/Therapist at Small Talk. She will answer any questions you have over the phone, or offer to set up a virtual meeting room online based on your preference.