

# Educational Information

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## 1. Who are Sex Offenders?

- There are currently 18,998 registered sex offenders in Colorado, including 16,962 adults and 2,046 juveniles (please see the *Educational Information About Juveniles Adjudicated of Sex Offenses* document for more information).
- There is no such thing as a “typical” sex offender; they come from all backgrounds, ages, income levels, and professions.
- Most sex offenders are “generalists” meaning that they commit a wide variety of offenses, not just sex offenses.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Do they have “preferred” victims?

- There are different theories for why offenders “choose” a certain victim. Research indicates that some offenders seek out certain victim types, and others target victims who are seen as easily accessible.<sup>25</sup>
- Most offenders sexually assault a person they already know, including family members, friends, and acquaintances.<sup>26</sup>
- Existing research estimates that approximately 55% of reported online offenders (i.e., child sexual exploitation material offenders, also known as pornography offenders) have also committed unreported contact/hands-on offenses (based on offender self-report).<sup>27</sup>
- Offenders who have pre-pubescent victims (children under age 13) are most likely to engage in gender cross-over, meaning they are more likely to have abused both boys and girls.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Lin, J. & Simon, W. (2016). Examining specialization among sex offenders released from prison. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 28(3), 253-267.; Miethe, T., Olson, J., & Mitchell, O. (2006). Specialization and persistence in the arrest histories of sex offenders: A comparative analysis of alternative measures and offense types. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 43(3), 204-229.

<sup>25</sup> Farmer, M., McAlinden, A-M., & Maruna, S. (2016). Sex offending and situational motivation: Findings from a qualitative analysis of desistance from sexual offending. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 60(15), 1756-1775.; Mann, R. E., Hanson, R. K., & Thornton, D. (2010). Assessing risk for sexual recidivism: Some proposals on the nature of psychologically meaningful risk factors. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 22(2), 191-217.

<sup>26</sup> Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., ..., Stevens, M. R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention.

<sup>27</sup> Seto, M. C., Hanson, R. K., & Babchishin, K. M. (2011). Contact sexual offending by men with online sexual offenses. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23(1), 124-145.

<sup>28</sup> Levenson, J. S., Becker, J., & Morin, J. W. (2008). The relationship between victim age and gender crossover among sex offenders.



- Offenders with minor victims (under age 18) are most likely to cross-over between pre- and post-pubescent children.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. How likely are they to reoffend?

- Research indicates that, nationally, approximately 5% to 20% of adult sex offenders reoffend sexually over time.<sup>30</sup>
  - This re-offending rate is based on known information and is likely an underestimate due to underreporting.
- Nationally, approximately 12% reoffend by committing violent, but non-sexual offenses.<sup>31</sup>
- Most sex offender recidivism is for non-sexual and non-violent offenses. The majority of new sex offenses are not committed by registered sex offenses.<sup>32</sup>
- Offenders with male victims had higher recidivism rates than those who did not have male victims.<sup>33</sup>
- Sex offenders typically respond well to treatment; studies show that those who successfully complete treatment are least likely to reoffend.<sup>34</sup>

### 4. What is Colorado's process for managing sex offenders?

- Most convicted sex offenders in Colorado are subject to the supervision of a criminal justice agency, either probation, parole, or community corrections.
- The Sex Offender Management Board (SOMB) is tasked with setting standards for evaluators, treatment providers, and polygraph examiners, in addition to providing guidance to supervising officers, treatment victim advocates, and other professionals in the field.
- The SOMB recognizes that sex offenders can present a potential danger to the community and acknowledges the harm that was caused by the offender by their past behavior.
- Community safety and protecting victims is paramount in managing sex offenders on supervision.
- Colorado has moved to the TEAMS (Treatment, Engagement, Assessment, Management and Supervision) Model to manage sex offenders on community supervision. The TEAMS model aims to encourage collaboration between every

<sup>29</sup> Kleban, H., Chesin, M. S., Jeglic, E. L., Mercado, C. C. (2013). An exploration of crossover sexual offending. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 25(5), 427-443.

<sup>30</sup> Bench, L. L. & Allen, T. D. (2013). Assessing sex offender recidivism using multiple measures: A longitudinal analysis. *The Prison Journal*, 93(4), 411-428.; Hanson, R. K. (2000). Will they do it again? Predicting sex-offense recidivism. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), 106-109.; Hanson, R. K., Harris, T-L. S., & Helmus, L. (2007). Assessing the risk of sexual offenders on community supervision: The Dynamic Supervision Project. Public Safety Canada.; Helmus, R. K., Helmus, L., & Thornton, D. (2010). Predicting recidivism amongst sexual offenders: A multi-site study of Static-2002. *Law and Human Behavior*, 34, 198-211.

<sup>31</sup> Bench & Allen (2013); Hanson (2000)

<sup>32</sup> Bench & Allen (2013); Hanson (2000); Zgoba, K. M. & Levenson, J. (2012). Failure to register as a predictor of sex offense recidivism: The big bad wolf or a red herring? *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 24(4), 328-349.

<sup>33</sup> Kingston, D. A., Firestone, P., Wexler, A., & Bradford, J. M. (2008). Factors associated with recidivism among intrafamilial child molesters. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 14(1), 3-18.

<sup>34</sup> Kim, B., Benekos, P. J., Merlo, A. V. (2016). Sex offender recidivism revisited: Review of recent meta-analyses on the effects of sex offender treatment. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(1), 105-117.



professional responsible for monitoring the offender in the community. This collaboration promotes community safety and successful offender management.

- There are several professionals dedicated to the supervision and treatment of each sex offender in Colorado. They make up the Community Supervision Team (CST). They may include:

1. The supervising officers (parole, probation, community corrections, or in some cases the Department of Corrections)
2. The offender's treatment provider (a specially trained clinician/therapist)
3. Evaluators (a specially trained clinician)
4. The polygraph examiner
5. The victim representative

## **5. What is an SVP (Sexually Violent Predator)?**

- An adult who is convicted of certain offenses (listed below) who must register as a sex offender for the remainder of their natural lives.<sup>35</sup>
- Information describing the offender are published online by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- The offender is subject to community notifications where the local law enforcement agency provides information to the community in which the offender resides.
- To be designated an SVP, an offender must meet the criteria on a specialized assessment, and be convicted of either the attempt, solicitation, and conspiracy to commit one of the following:
  - Sexual assault
  - Unlawful sexual contact
  - Sexual assault on a child
  - Sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust.

*For a detailed list of statutory requirements and the specific statutes pertaining to each offense, please visit the Colorado Bureau of Investigation's Sex Offender Registry website at: <https://apps.colorado.gov/apps/dps/sor/information.jsf>*

## **6. How does the Colorado Sex Offender Registry work?**

- The Sex Offender Registry is maintained by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI), who regularly update registrant information.
- Sex offenders convicted of certain crimes are required to register with their law enforcement agency for various lengths of time. They are required to notify the law enforcement agencies of change in address, employment, and other information.
- CBI publishes the information of offenders who were convicted of a felony as an adult, but a list of all registered offenders available upon request. Local law enforcement agencies also have this list available.

*Please visit <https://apps.colorado.gov/apps/dps/sor/information.jsf> to view the registry.*

<sup>35</sup> These offenders are interviewed by a trained professional who uses the Sexually Violent Predator Assessment Screening Instrument to determine if the offenders are at high risk for future sexual reoffending.



## 7. How often does victimization occur?

- The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicates that one in three women and one in six men experienced some form of contact sexual violence (including rape, sexual coercion, and/or unwanted sexual contact).
- Research estimates that one in five women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives.
- Women are most likely to be raped by current or former intimate partners (47%).
- The Campus Climate Survey Validation Study reports that 21% of female students and 7% of male students in their sample reported being victims of sexual assault since beginning college.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014 report on rape and sexual assault among college-aged females estimated that approximately six per 1,000 females enrolled in college are sexually assaulted.
- It is estimated that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before they turn 18.
- Research estimates that 1/3 of child sexual abuse victims are abused by a family member.
- The National Sexual Violence Resource Center estimates that 325,000 children are at risk of becoming victims of sexual exploitation each year.
- The average age of first becoming forced or coerced into prostitution is 12 to 14 years old for girls and 11 to 13 for boys.

## 8. Reporting sex offenses

- Research indicates that only between 19% and 23% of rapes and sexual assaults are reported to law enforcement.
- The 2006 National Violence Against Women Survey concluded that only 19% of women and 12% of men, ages 18 or older, reported their rape to law enforcement.
- According to the 2014 Campus Climate Survey Validation Study, only about 13% of rapes were reported to an official (including law enforcement, school officials, health care staff, and helplines), while 64% of rapes were disclosed to a roommate, friend, or family member.
- Minor victims of intra-familial sexual abuse are unlikely to report the abuse to authorities.
- Victims are often afraid or uncomfortable to report their victimization. Some reasons include fear of retaliation, shame, or believing that no one will believe them.

## 9. I know someone who has been victimized. How can I be supportive?

- Start by believing them: "I'm glad you told me. I am here for you."
- Let them know you are there for them, but remember that it is their choice to accept help or not.
- Keep it simple: "I believe you. I'm sorry this happened. How can I help?"
- Avoid "why" questions - these can sound accusatory or make the survivor think it was their fault.
- Educate yourself about the reporting process, services available to survivors, etc. But remember, it is their choice to engage in this process.



- DO NOT say things like “Were you drunk?”, “Are you sure? He’s such a nice guy?”, “Men can’t be sexually assaulted.”.

*Please see the Resources section for local and national organizations that can help you and your loved one.*

#### **10. What do I need to know?**

- Approximately 20-39% of teenagers either send or receive sexually explicit images.
- Girls and boys are most likely to send images to their romantic partner, but boys are more likely than girls to send images to friends and people with whom they want to have casual sexual encounters.
- According to one study, 68% of high school girls and 42% of high school boys were asked by someone else to send an explicit photo of themselves.
- Girls who engage in sexting are six times more likely to be bullied than those who did not sext.
- Between 9% and 17% of youth reported unwanted online sexual solicitation.
- Approximately 54% of youth who receive unwanted online sexual solicitation are between 13 to 17 years old.
- Many offenders use e-grooming (establishing a rapport through an electronic platform for the purpose of a sexual relationship), which can continue for days or weeks before the offender introduces sexual content.
- Girls are three times more likely to receive online sexual solicitations than boys.
- Most victims knew they were communicating with adults with sexual intentions, and in some cases, meeting the offender multiple times in person.
- Approximately 12% of girls and 5% of boys in grades 9-12 reported being forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their lives.

#### **11. Sex Trafficking: Does it happen in Colorado?**

- In the U.S., there were a total of 5,593 cases of sex trafficking in 2016.
- In Colorado, there were 152 cases investigated by the Rocky Mountain Innocence Lost Task Force. They rescued 119 sex trafficking victims through their investigations.
- In 2017, there were 41 cases of sex trafficking in Colorado (the number of victims has not yet been reported).
- The majority of sex trafficking victims are female.
- Of sex trafficking victims, approximately 45% knew their trafficker prior to victimization.
- 67% of sex trafficking cases used technology to advertise.
- The average age of a sex trafficked victim is 15 years old.
- More than half of sex trafficking victims are runaways.
- 18% of sex traffickers sexually assaulted and 20% physically assaulted their minor victims to “condition” them during recruitment.

*Please see the Resources section for local and national organizations that provide information on sex trafficking and assist sex trafficking victims.*

**12. How can I increase my personal safety?**

- While there are some safety tips that can help reduce your chance of victimization, assaults are never the result of things the victim did or did not do.
- Remember, most sexual assaults are committed by someone already known to the victim - strangers are not the primary risk. If you feel uncomfortable in someone's presence, tell someone. Don't be afraid to make a scene if necessary.
- Be thoughtful and use good judgement in choosing friends, partners, and casual acquaintances. This is especially true if you have been consuming alcohol or drugs of any kind; you are more vulnerable when intoxicated.
- Be cautious of those you meet on the internet - dating websites and apps (such as Tinder) have become increasingly popular recently. Not everyone represents themselves accurately on these forums. When meeting people in person, make sure you are in a safe place and that you are able to leave easily if necessary.
- Be observant and aware of your surroundings. Do don't leave your food or drink unattended at a party or public place. Don't be embarrassed to use ask security staff to walk you to your car.

**13. How can I prevent negative interactions with Registered Sex Offenders?**

- You can educate yourself about known sex offenders in your community by contacting your local law enforcement agency or CBI. Community Notification meetings also provide valuable information about SVPs.
- Do not go out of your way to bother sex offenders in your community. Creating a negative environment will actually *increase* the chance that they reoffend. Be aware of their offense and take precautions if necessary. If you see them doing something suspicious or are concerned about their behavior, you can contact your local law enforcement agency.

**14. How should I talk to my children about sex offenders?**

- Talking to your child before an assault happens is the best prevention:
  - Let them know that they can talk to you about things that make them feel bad.
  - Instilling strong self-esteem in your child may help them avoids feelings of responsibility and guilt, and make them more comfortable disclosing abuse.
  - Open communication about sexual topics at home can make it easier for children to disclose victimization by minimizing discomfort. If your child has questions or is curious about certain things, do not be dismissive or make them feel bad about asking these questions.
- Knowing perpetrator tactics and how a child may react can help you detect sexual abuse:
  - Offenders may threaten to hurt the child, a family member, or a pet of the child if they tell anyone about the abuse. This is common regardless of whether the offender is a family member, friend, acquaintance, or stranger.



- A child often feels that they are to blame for the abuse. The offender may reinforce this by using guilt tactics on the child.
- Offenders may follow up the abusive incident with threats or gifts for the child. This can be very confusing and make the child feel guilty for accepting gifts and/or for feeling bad about the abuse.
- It is common for a child to deny that abuse happened even if it did or disclose the abuse, and then recant their original statement. This is especially true if the offender is a friend or family member. There is little evidence to suggest that children make false allegations of abuse.
- Responding appropriately when your child is victimized can make all the difference in their healing process:
  - Always believe your child when they tell you about abuse.
  - If you think abuse is going on, act on that instinct.
  - Don't force a child to talk about or stop talking about the abuse. Allow them to go at their own pace and be patient.
  - Remind your child how brave they are for telling about the abuse.
  - Get support for you and your child; this is a very difficult issue for any one person to handle. Your local child advocacy center is a great place to start for a local resource.
- Avoid scary details:
  - Use age-appropriate language.
  - Include general information, as this may protect them from others who would try to harm them, without confusing or upsetting them.
  - If there is a registered sex offender in your neighborhood or near your home, you should show your child the sex offender's photo and instruct them to avoid contact with the offender.
  - Encourage them to tell you if the registered sex offender initiates contact with them. In general, sex offenders who are on parole or probation are not allowed to initiate contact with children, and any contact should be reported to your local law enforcement agency.
- Teach your child:
  - Don't take rides from strangers.
  - Don't keep secrets. Tell them it is okay if they tell a safe adult or older sibling instead of you, but make sure they know they can tell someone.
  - Don't go places alone.
  - Do run, scream, and get away from someone bothering them.
  - Do tell them it is okay to say "no" when a friend or family member makes them uncomfortable. Unwanted tickling, kissing on the cheek, hugging, etc. by a friend or family member, while well intentioned and innocent, can often teach the child that they can't say no to an adult.
- Remember:
  - Do talk to your children about inappropriate touching.
  - Do ask questions.
  - Do talk about uncomfortable feelings or interactions, regardless of who it is.

**15. Victim Services and Family Resources**

- [www.seekthenspeak.org](http://www.seekthenspeak.org) - National
- [www.startbybelieving.org/home](http://www.startbybelieving.org/home) - National
- [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) - National
- [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org) - National
- [www.denvergov.org/startbybelieving](http://www.denvergov.org/startbybelieving) - Denver Metro
- [www.thebluebench.org](http://www.thebluebench.org) - Denver Metro
- [www.movingtoendsexualassault.org](http://www.movingtoendsexualassault.org) - Boulder

**16. Sex Trafficking**

- [www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org) - National; 1-888-373-7888
- [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com) - National
- [www.combathumantrafficking.org](http://www.combathumantrafficking.org) - Colorado; 1-866-455-5075



**Treatment, Engagement, Assessment, Management and Supervision  
(TEAMS) Model**



TEAMS is an acronym for Treatment, Engagement, Assessment, Management and Supervision. This model guides the CST members to work collaboratively with each other to assist the client/offender in becoming a pro-social, productive member of society, and in order to enhance community safety. The foundations of the model are Victim and Community Safety, the use of Evidence Based and Research Informed Practices, Informed Public Policies and Collaboration.

Community safety is enhanced when treatment providers and community supervision professionals practice in their area of specialization and work together. This collaboration should include frequent and substantive communication about information that will assist in reducing an offender's risk to the community. When the CST members respect individual roles and mutually agree upon their goals and the treatment and supervision interventions that will be pursued, the offender can be treated and managed more effectively.

The components of the TEAMS Model are:

- A. **Community Supervision** - Community supervision is made up of Probation, Parole, Community Corrections or a modified CST in the Department of Corrections.
- B. **Evaluation and Assessments** - Evaluations include empirically validated instruments that determine risk. For the purpose of the TEAMS Model, assessments may include, but are not limited to, a polygraph report, viewing time instruments and/or a PPG. (See Section 2.000.)
- C. **Treatment** - SOMB approved sex offense-specific treatment. Treatment may also include adjunct treatment for underlying mental health or drug and alcohol treatment. (See Section 3.000.)
- D. **Support System** – The support system can be an individual(s), a family member(s) or an organization(s) that provides pro-social support to enhance offender motivation for

positive behavioral change.

The goal of the CST's collaborative efforts is to engage offenders in treatment and supervision in order to decrease risk, enhance protective factors, and increase their intrinsic motivation for positive behavioral **change**.

- An individual's support system is an important factor in a person's motivation for change. Those who have offended are more likely to achieve success when they receive caring support from families<sup>36</sup> and other natural support systems (e.g. - friends, Circles of Support and Accountability, spiritual advisors, etc.) and the community. Such support encourages an individual's engagement in treatment, efforts to live a healthy and productive life, and success in meeting supervision requirements.<sup>37</sup>
- Assignment to community supervision is a privilege (alternative to incarceration), and sex offenders must be completely accountable for their behaviors. They must agree to intensive and sometimes intrusive accountability measures, which enable them to remain in the community rather than in prison. They must learn to be completely accountable to maintain the privilege of remaining under community supervision.

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<sup>36</sup> The term "family" is used in a broad sense and should be defined by the person who has offended.

<sup>37</sup> de Vries Robbé, M., Mann, R. E., Maruna, S., & Thornton, D. (2015). An exploration of protective factors supporting desistance from sexual offending. *Sexual abuse: a journal of research and treatment*, 27(1), 16-33.; Willis, G. M., & Grace, R. C. (2008). The quality of community reintegration planning for child molester's effects on sexual recidivism. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 20(2), 218-240.; Willis, G. M., & Grace, R. C. (2009). Assessment of Community Reintegration Planning for Sex Offenders Poor Planning Predicts Recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 36(5), 494-512.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1) *What does SVP mean?*

SVP stands for Sexually Violent Predator. SVP is a legal federal term. It is a designation given to convicted adult sex offenders who are considered at a high risk to commit another crime. "In 1999, the General Assembly found that persons who are convicted of offenses involving unlawful sexual behavior and who are identified as sexually violent predators pose a high enough level of risk to the community that persons in the community should notification concerning the identity of these sexually violent predators." 16-13-901, C.R.S. SVPs are identified by their crime of conviction and by their rating on a risk assessment instrument. Offenders who meet the criteria for SVP must register quarterly with their local law enforcement agency for life. If a person is found to be an SVP, the community must be notified every time the SVP changes residence.

### 2) *If this sex offender is so dangerous, why is he/she allowed out in the community?*

Sentencing of sex offenders, including SVPs, depends upon the crime of conviction as well as the court of jurisdiction. While SVPs may be sentenced to lengthy prison terms, some will be sentenced into the community with probation services or a community corrections placement. SVP's sentenced to prison have a potential of being paroled to the community.

In determining an SVP's risk to the community, the Court considers the professional recommendation of the probation officer and the assessment of sex offense-specific evaluator. If the SVP is determined to be manageable in the community, a recommendation may be made that the SVP be supervised by probation. In all cases, the Court must make the determination regarding the placement of an SVP.

- The Court or the Parole Board, will make the final determination regarding the SVP's release into the community.
- Remember that not every community member will be satisfied with your answer, therefore, present the material in general terms.
- It would be beneficial to have someone who was involved in determining the release of an SVP, such as District Attorney or supervising officer, available at the meeting to discuss the factors that led to the recommendation that the SVP be released into the community.
- As a state, we do not imprison all sex offenders, including those who are supervised by the criminal justice system through probation or parole.
- In Colorado, many SVPs will be subject to our Lifetime Supervision Law, which makes it easier to contain an offender if they demonstrate increased risk.

Sex offense-specific treatment programs are offered to all convicted sex offenders regardless of the type of sentence they receive.

### 3) *Why aren't communities notified when other types of sex offenders are released?*



Communities in Colorado are notified when all convicted sex offenders move into their jurisdictions, either through the sex offender registry or the community notification process regarding SVPs. The sex offender registry lists ***all*** convicted sex offenders who are required to register with local law enforcement in each community. Every citizen has the right to obtain the registry from his or her local law enforcement agency. They can also view ***adult felony*** sex offenders and ***SVPs*** on the internet either via the local law enforcement website (police department or sheriff) or Colorado Bureau of Investigations via the following link:  
<https://www.colorado.gov/apps/cdps/sor>

**4) *Isn't it just a matter of time before the SVP commits another crime?***

Sex offenders are capable of change. Many sex offenders can be closely monitored for risk behavior while under supervision and treatment. A sex offender can learn through treatment to manage their sexual offending behaviors and decrease their risk of re-offense. However, such behavioral management and treatment cannot permanently eliminate the risk that sex offenders may commit another crime.

**5) *Now that I know a sex offender lives in my community, what should I do differently to protect family and myself?***

Read the educational and public safety materials available through the community notification process, which offer prevention information regarding sex offenders for you and your family.

- Read the SVP Bulletin to learn more about this specific SVP and any behaviors you should report to law enforcement.
- Support and attend sexual assault prevention programs for yourself and your children.

**6) *What do I tell my children about this SVP?***

- Talking to your child before an assault happens is the best prevention:
  - Let them know that they can talk to you about things that make them feel bad.
  - Instilling strong self-esteem in your child may help them avoid feelings of responsibility and guilt, and make them more comfortable disclosing abuse.
  - Open communication about sexual topics at home can make it easier for children to disclose victimization by minimizing discomfort. If your child has questions or is curious about certain things, do not be dismissive or make them feel bad about asking these questions.
- Knowing perpetrator tactics and how a child may react can help you detect sexual abuse:
  - Offenders may threaten to hurt the child, a family member, or a pet of the child if they tell anyone about the abuse. This is common regardless of whether the offender is a family member, friend, acquaintance, or stranger.
  - A child often feels that they are to blame for the abuse. The offender may reinforce this by using guilt tactics on the child.
  - Offenders may follow up the abusive incident with threats or gifts for the child. This can be very confusing and make the child feel guilty for accepting gifts and/or for feeling bad about the abuse.



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  - Always believe your child when they tell you about abuse.
  - If you think abuse is going on, act on that instinct.
  - Don't force a child to talk about or stop talking about the abuse. Allow them to go at their own pace and be patient.
  - Remind your child how brave they are for telling about the abuse.
  - Get support for you and your child; this is a very difficult issue for any one person to handle. Your local child advocacy center is a great place to start for a local resource.
- Avoid scary details:
  - Use age-appropriate language.
  - Include general information, as this may protect them from others who would try to harm them, without confusing or upsetting them.
  - If there is a registered sex offender in your neighborhood or near your home, you should show your child the sex offender's photo and instruct them to avoid contact with the offender.
  - Encourage them to tell you if the registered sex offender initiates contact with them. In general, sex offenders who are on parole or probation are not allowed to initiate contact with children, and any contact should be reported to your local law enforcement agency.
- Teach your child:
  - Don't take rides from strangers.
  - Don't keep secrets. Tell them it is okay if they tell a safe adult or older sibling instead of you, but make sure they know they can tell someone.
  - Don't go places alone.
  - Do run, scream, and get away from someone bothering them.
  - Do tell them it is okay to say "no" when a friend or family member makes them uncomfortable. Unwanted tickling, kissing on the cheek, hugging, etc. by a friend or family member, while well intentioned and innocent, can often teach the child that they can't say no to an adult.
- Remember:
  - Do talk to your children about inappropriate touching.
  - Do ask questions.
  - Do talk about uncomfortable feelings or interactions, regardless of who it is.

## 7) How would I know if my child has been sexually victimized?

If you notice behavioral changes or if you suspect that your child has been sexually victimized, contact your local law enforcement agency, Department of Social Services or Child Advocacy Center



immediately. Also, give your child permission to talk to you about things that may be bothering them and encourage them to attend child abuse prevention programs held through schools and community programs.

It is important to remember that though SVPs may pose a risk, they are not the only sex offenders in the community. Other offenders who may be dangerous, but who are not subject to community notification by law, include all un-convicted sex offenders, all sex offenders whose offenses were committed prior to July 1, 1997 and many who have not been identified as known sex offenders.

**Research indicates that a person is most likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know. Further, the majority of sex offenses are not reported to authorities. MOST importantly, ALWAYS believe your children!**

