

## Resource for parents and children: a guide to informing and protecting children from abuse

*The following material is written for children. Adults may wish to read this to six to nine year olds, and while nine to twelve year olds should be able to read it on their own, it would be good to discuss this with an adult:*

### ❖ What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is a touch on a private part of your body, like your penis or vagina or breast. But it wasn't an accident and the person who touched you didn't seem to care whether it was private or not. The person who touched you did it in a way that made you feel bad and confused about yourself.

The person who touched you may have made you feel you were the one to blame. You may feel guilty even if it wasn't your fault. Sexual abuse may mean that an older person has made you touch his or her private parts.

Sexual abuse may also mean an older person has made you watch something you didn't want to watch. If you ever had a teenage baby-sitter make you watch him masturbate (play with his penis), that's sexual abuse. Or if you ever had an older person make you watch movies or people playing with one another's private parts, that's sexual abuse too.

### ❖ How do I know if I have been sexually abused?

You know you've been sexually abused:

- if the touching was done on purpose, and not by accident
- if the touching made you feel bad but maybe, sometimes, felt a little good at the same time
- if the person who touched you told you to keep it a secret.

### ❖ Who should I tell?

It's important to tell an adult if you've been sexually abused, but you have to think carefully. Ask yourself who will help you. Then tell that person.

### ❖ What is the person I tell supposed to do?

When you tell an adult that you've been sexually abused, that person is supposed to tell either a social worker or police officer.

The law says the adult *must* do this. We have this law because we believe that all children in this country have a right to be protected from sexual abuse.

### ❖ Is telling worth all the trouble?

If you tell an adult that you have been sexually abused, a lot of things can happen afterwards. You will be interviewed by social services and the police, and you will probably see a doctor and an abuse counselor. Telling may upset the people in your family. If the abuser is charged you may have to go to court to testify, and that could take a long time.

Most children who have told about being sexually abused say it's worth it. It's worth it because they have freed themselves from a guilty secret. Most adults who are getting counseling today for sexual abuse that happened when they were children say, "I only wish I could have told someone when I was a child."

But the choice is yours. No-one else can decide for you, but a lot of people can help after you have decided to tell. There are people who want to help you.

[adapted from *Sexual Abuse - what happens when you tell: a guide for children* by the Vancouver Incest and Sexual Abuse Centre]

## Where to Report a Case of Child Abuse or Neglect

Reports should be made to the local children's services agency (i.e., Children's Aid Societies/Family and Children's Services agencies or District Offices, Department of Community Services).

Children's Aid Society of Halifax  
5244 South Street  
Halifax NS B3J 1A4  
Phone: (902) 425-5420 Fax: (902) 422-9424

Department of Community Services  
Family and Children's Services  
P. O. Box 696  
Halifax NS B3J 2T7  
**Phone: (902) 424-4279 Fax: (902) 424-0721**

## Nova Scotia Child Abuse Register

Department of Community Services  
Family and Children's Services  
P.O. Box 696  
Halifax NS B3J 2T7  
(902) 424-6798

## Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners for Young Friends and Adults

Canadian Yearly Meeting National Listeners are available to listen to any Canadian Quaker disclose harm done on matters of sexual harassment or abuse, or any other topic a Friend may need to discuss. If you need a listener, the first step is to approach a trusted Friend within your Monthly Meeting, or to go to your Monthly Meeting Ministry and Counsel. If this path is not comfortable you may contact a National Listener. Listeners seek to be present from a place of spirit-centred openness - to hold the caller and the situation in the Light, and to listen with tenderness. Knowing the healing that comes from simply being heard, we offer you a safe and confidential space in which to speak. One call may be all you need. If not, we have the task of discerning with you what a next step could be: whether a committee of care, of clearness, or of oversight might be appropriate; or how to find other resources.

An updated list of listeners is included in every edition of *The Canadian Friend*.

### Other groups:

#### Family SOS

#337-7071 Bayers Road, Halifax NS B3L 2G2

Phone: (902) 455-5515

A local organization funded by Children's Aid that offers services to families and children in crisis as well as public education. Families and children voluntarily accept service. Service is never mandated by the court or Children's Aid. This is an excellent resource for information on the prevention of and the reporting of family violence and abuse.

**Parent Help Line** - Toll free. Does not appear on phone bill.

1 888 603-9100

**Kids' Helpline** - For ages 4-20. Toll free. Does not appear on phone bill.

1 800 668-6868

**Local Help Line** - (902) 421-1188

**Local Sexual Assault Centre** - (902) 422-4240

**Anti-violence Centres in Nova Scotia**

- [www.casac.ca/english/avcentres/rccs\\_nscfm](http://www.casac.ca/english/avcentres/rccs_nscfm)

*Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognize the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care.*

*Approved by Halifax Monthly Meeting - June 2006*

FOR KIDS, TOO

## Halifax Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

### Creating a Safe Faith Community: responding to abuse issues involving children and youth

We affirm that the abuse of children will not be tolerated or ignored in our community of faith. We seek to provide a safe, secure place where all can grow in faith and wisdom and so must address the need to develop and implement abuse prevention policies and strategies.

***The child victim is never responsible for causing the abuse, and is never to be blamed for the abuse. The child victim is never capable of consent to abusive behavior, either legally or morally. Child abuse is always wrong and is solely the responsibility of the abuser.***

There are legal responsibilities if abuse is discovered or disclosed. It is important to report suspected child abuse immediately. The duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect overrides the confidentiality requirement of all professional relationships and includes information considered to be privileged. Every person in Nova Scotia is required under the Children and Family Services Act to report child abuse and neglect.

***Every person to whom a child discloses abuse, or who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is or may be in need of protection, must follow these incident procedures:***

***- if a child reports abuse, stay with the child or leave them with a responsible adult, while you report immediately to the Children's Aid Society at (902) 425-5420***

***- complete an Incident Report and give to a member of Ministry and Counsel within 24 hours.***

For more information, please refer to the report *Creating a Safe Faith Community: reducing the risk of abuse and responding to abuse issues involving children and youth* which is on the Meeting's web page: [www.quaker.ca/halifax](http://www.quaker.ca/halifax) and in the library at AST.