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December 2012

## Stewards of Children® Participants...Never Stop Learning!

*You are receiving this email because you have attended a Stewards of Children training with Chaucie's Place. We want to continue to provide helpful information, tips, stories in the news, trainings, and other valuable resources to help expand your awareness and strengthen your role as a steward of children. Without ongoing education and dialogue in our community, it is impossible to move forward and end this epidemic.*

This month features highlights from all of our 2012 Stewards of Children. We are deeply appreciative of each of you for making the effort to become trained on how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. We are proud our community has responded so strongly to this program and we look forward to continuing to reach even more adults in 2013!

### Behaviors To Watch For In Adults

90% of children who are sexually abused know their abuser, so protecting our children from people they already know - possibly love and trust - can be challenging and a hard reality to grasp. Here are some behaviors to watch for in adults:

Do you know an adult who has difficulty with:

#### *Personal space*

- Makes others uncomfortable by ignoring social, emotional or physical boundaries or limits?
- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits? Uses teasing or belittling language to keep a child from setting a limit?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this physical contact or attention?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?

#### *Relationships with children*

- Has secret interactions with teens or children or spends excessive time emailing, text messaging or calling children or youth?
- Insists on or manages to spend uninterrupted time alone with a child?
- Seems "too good to be true," i.e. frequently babysits different children for free; takes children on special outings alone; buys children gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors?
- Turns to a child for emotional or physical comfort by sharing personal or private information or activities, normally shared with adults?

#### *Sexual conversation or behavior*

- Frequently points out sexual images or tells dirty or suggestive jokes with children present?
- Exposes a child to adult sexual interactions or images without apparent concern?
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating)?

### How To Have Conversations With Your Children

We understand talking about child sexual abuse can be a very difficult topic, but remember, children will sense if you are uncomfortable or embarrassed to have this conversation, and will often mirror your emotions. Here are some suggestions we hope you find helpful.

- Use proper names for body parts. Giving cute names for body parts can send a message to the child that you are uncomfortable talking about them, or that they shouldn't be spoken about.
- Let the child know that no one has the right to touch them on their private parts or in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable - and that this includes relatives, siblings, friends, teachers,

coaches, etc.

- Tell young children to yell "Stop!" or "No!" and to tell an adult if someone hurts or touches them in an uncomfortable way. Be sure they know to say it like they mean it! Praise their performance. It's most likely that a child will actually do this in a situation of abuse if he or she has practiced it.

REMEMBER: Talking to your child about sexual abuse should not just happen one time. This should be treated like any other conversation you have with your children about safety - make sure it occurs on a regular basis.

## ***After The Jerry Sandusky Trial: Lessons For Parents***

It is essential that we, as adults, take an active role in protecting our children by having actions that match our intentions so children can live their lives to their highest potential. Here are lessons parents can learn from the Jerry Sandusky Trial:

1. Don't allow the use of the word "secret". Many children keep their abuse a secret. Talk to your child about the difference between a secret and a surprise and help them understand that if someone tells them to keep a secret, they should tell you.
2. Be leery of any adult who is smitten with your child. Child molesters are savvy; they often prey on vulnerable kids - poor children, or those whose parents aren't often around.
3. Pay attention to your kids' rhythms and learn to recognize potential signs of abuse: changes in mood, behavior or school performance and reluctance to participate in activities.
4. It's never too early to start teaching your kids about what kinds of touches/behaviors are appropriate and, keep the conversation going as kids become teens. It's a mistake to assume that most children will readily tell a grown-up if they've been sexually assaulted.
5. Listen when kids talk and reassure the child you believe them.

View the full article [here](#).

## ***Why Don't Children Disclose?***

- Knowing that 90% of child sexual abuse victims know their abuser, it is common for children to keep it a secret because they fear that person will get in trouble.
- The perpetrator may have made threats of bodily harm to the child or the child's family.
- The child may have a fear of being removed from the home.
- The child may have a fear of not being believed.
- The child may have feelings of shame or guilt - doesn't want to get in trouble.
- The child may not have the language skills to express what happened.
- The child may not know it is abusive because they were made to think it was a game.

To help prevent children from not disclosing it is important to know how children communicate.

- Children who disclose sexual abuse often tell a trusted adult other than a parent. Therefore, training for people who work with children in any capacity is very important. Encourage your children's schools, sports teams and other youth-serving organizations to become trained in Stewards of Children so they know how to prevent, recognize and react appropriately to child sexual abuse.
- Children may tell "parts" of what happened or pretend it happened to someone else to gauge adult reaction.
- Children will often "shut down" and refuse to tell more if you respond emotionally or negatively.

Also, talk openly with your child.

- Teach your child that it is your job to protect him.
- Teach your child that it is not her responsibility to protect others.
- Demonstrate daily that you will not be angry, no matter what your child tells you about any aspect of his life.
- Teach your child that it is against the "rules" for adults to act in a sexual way with children and use examples.

## ***Establishing Family Policies And Boundaries:***

Many times we discuss the importance of youth-serving organizations establishing policies regarding protecting children from sexual abuse, but it is just as important to do the same within your families.

- Demonstrate boundaries by showing children in your own life how to say "no." Teach your children that their "no" will be respected, whether it's in playing or tickling or hugging or kissing.
- If a child does not want to hug or kiss someone hello or goodbye, that should be ok. And make sure, too, that other family members understand why this is important for the safety of the child.
- Let children know that if they are not comfortable being around a particular adult or older child, then they don't have to be around that person.
- As a child matures, boundaries may need to change.
  - Knock on the door before entering the room, sleeping arrangements, etc.
- Let family members know that secrets are not allowed. Both the adults and children in your life need to know how secrets may make kids unsafe. Secrets exclude others, often because the information will create anger. When keeping secrets with just one person becomes routine, children are more vulnerable to abuse.

Indiana law demands that we are each mandated reporters of any suspicion of abuse. If you need to make a report please call the Department of Child Services hotline at 1-800-800-5556 and your local law enforcement agency.

*Please forward to your friends, family and colleagues!*

### Next Stewards of Children Training:

**January 15th, 2013**

5:30pm - 8:00pm

Chaucie's Place  
4607 E. 106th St., Carmel

To register:

<http://chauciesplace.org/stewards-of-children-registration>



#### About Chaucie's Place

Chaucie's Place works passionately to ensure the welfare of children by offering evidence-based, high-quality prevention programs to end the cycle of abuse and to empower children and adults to take an active role to make sure that children of central Indiana have the opportunity to live to their highest potential.

The center provides a neutral, child-focused environment where forensic interviews may take place for cases of alleged child sexual and physical abuse and neglect to help reduce trauma for child victims.

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