

PREVENTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

As a parent or carer, you play a crucial role in keeping all children and young people safe and protected from abuse. This includes protecting children and young people from child exploitation.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY CHILD FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

In general, children and young people are less vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse if they are engaged in school or training or employment and have strong connections with their parents or carers. To protect your child you should:

1) KNOW THE SIGNS AND BE ALERT

Acting early on warning signs can prevent abuse from happening or escalating. Be observant, listen to your child and look out for physical or other non-verbal signs that may indicate things that the child or young person cannot put into words.

2) COMMUNICATE AND BE AVAILABLE

Foster relationships where children and young people in your care are comfortable sharing all sorts of information, even on embarrassing or uncomfortable topics. Talk to them often about their day, their experiences and their relationships. Children are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse if their emotional needs are not being met and they feel like they have no one to talk to. Regular conversations give children the opportunity to share concerns and give you the opportunity to recognise worrying signs earlier.

3) KNOW THEIR FRIENDS

Become familiar with your child's friends so that you can monitor positive and negative influences. Knowing your child's friends may also lead to them being able to share any concerns they have with you about your child.

4) EDUCATE YOURSELF

Get to know what children and young people are learning about sex and relationships at school and become familiar with the ways your child communicates with others (including social media and other online and mobile forms of communication). Get to know about warning signs of child sexual exploitation, different social media tools and cybersafety.

5) EDUCATE YOUR CHILD

Take time to discuss with your child issues around cybersafety and respectful relationships. Consider what strategies you and your child could use to seek assistance with any questions or concerns about an individual's behaviour.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY CHILD FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ONLINE?

The internet and social media give offenders a way to 'target' their victims. Children and young people often make poor decisions about allowing people into their online lives, which can make them more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. To improve your child's safety online you can:

- ensure your child uses computers in public areas of the home such as the living room
- ensure you are able to access your child's email and let them know that you may randomly check the contents
- check your phone bill for unusual outgoing calls
- make sure children and young people are aware of how to use social media safely and what to do if they see or experience something that makes them uncomfortable
- install filtering software on computers used by children and young people
- friend your children on social media
- show children and young people sites they can go to for help and talk to them about what to do if they see something that makes them uncomfortable online
- discuss the issues and risks with your children.

For more information see:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/parentcyber.aspx>

Age appropriate sex education is important for all children and young people to equip them with the tools necessary to navigate relationships and their sexuality. For information see:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/social/physed/Pages/forparents.asp>

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WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT?

If you are at all concerned about the possibility of your child being the victim of a sexual predator online or in person, please contact the Victoria Police for advice and assistance.

If you believe your child is in immediate danger, please phone 000.

If you are concerned about online behaviour involving the sexual exploitation of a child or young person, you can report it to the Australian Federal Police www.afp.gov.au

USEFUL RESOURCES

PROTECT

www.education.vic.gov.au/Protect

BULLY STOPPERS

www.education.vic.gov.au/Bullystoppers

THINKYOUKNOW

www.thinkuknow.org.au

WARNING SIGNS

<http://knowaboutcse.co.uk/spot-the-signs/>

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE BY AGE

http://childwise.blob.core.windows.net/assets/uploads/files/SpeakUp_booklet_VIC.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BY AGE TRAUMA INDICATORS

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children,-youth-and-families/child-protection/specialist-practice-resources-for-child-protection-workers/child-development-and-trauma-specialist-practice-resource>