

You have just learned that your child has been the victim of a sex-related crime.

What should you do? How can you best help your child cope with this incident? How will you deal with your own feelings about what has happened?

Glendale's Victim Assistance Program hopes that this brochure will give you some helpful suggestions.

initial reactions are critical

The reaction of those around your child is the single most important factor in how he or she will cope with being the victim of a sex-related crime such as rape, molestation or indecent exposure. Immediately after the incident, provide your child with plenty of reassurance, comfort, affection and consideration. After the initial crisis, you need to find a delicate balance. You should not dwell on the issues or give it unusual amounts of attention, but you also need to be open to your child's questions and expressions of feelings.

hide your negative feelings

Watch your comments, both those made directly to your child and those that your child may overhear. You may be passing on your fears, biases or shame to your child. Comments that seem helpful on the surface, such as, "You must be angry," or "You must have been very upset," can set the child up for problems. Demands for revenge or threats about the offender can further confuse or frighten your child. Children do not want to see you get in trouble for something that happened to them. Also, be careful not to make your child feel that he/she is "ruined for life" because of the incident. Instead, assure your child that it was an unfortunate experience, but one they will get over. Children are often so resilient that they can bounce back from bad experiences with little difficulty. Remember, your child may not be as upset as you are. In fact, most parents are much more upset about what happened than their child is.

don't add to the child's guilt

Guilt can be emotionally devastating to a child. "Whys" add to feelings of guilt. Avoid statements such as, "Why did you talk with him?" or "Why didn't you just run away?" or "Why didn't you remember what I taught you about strangers?" or "Why didn't you tell me?"

Even if you sincerely believe that your child used bad judgment, this is not the time to give a lecture. Keep in mind that your child did not ask to be victimized. Do not punish your child or try to make him/her feel responsible for the incident. Also, in your attempt to make some sense of what happened, do not blame yourself. Neither you nor your child is responsible - the offender is the only person responsible.

be careful not to create fear

Watch for creating a fear of the world or a fear/disgust of sex and bodily functions. Let the child know in simple terms that what happened was wrong and unusual, and that the offender is a person with problems.

If it ever happens again, encourage your child to say "No," to run away and to tell you or another responsible adult such as a teacher, a school counselor or school nurse about the incident. If your child shows more curiosity or asks more questions, answer them honestly without providing more information than he/she asks for.

If your child exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior, use a "good manners" approach to remold their understanding about what is and is not appropriate. Do not make him/her feel bad about such behavior. The offender probably tricked your child into thinking it was okay.

respect your child's privacy

Respect your child's privacy and feelings. Who you and your child tell about what happened is strictly up to you and your child. It is suggested that all adults who are told about the incident read this brochure so that they

respond in a supportive, caring way. Some people may say things that hurt simply because they don't know better. Gossip and rumors add to everyone's stress. All members of your immediate family (mother, father, brothers and sisters) should be told so they all can provide needed support and understanding to your child.

understanding the court process

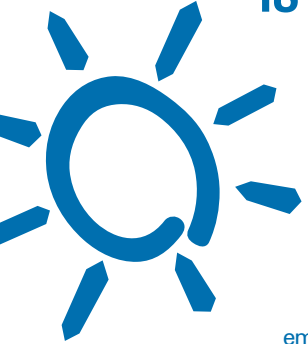
Most parents do not have a realistic understanding of how the court process works. They fear that the court experience will be traumatic to their child. This need not be and is not usually the case. Victim advocates are available to help you and your child through the court process. Victims also have specific rights under Arizona laws and the Rules of Criminal Procedure which ensure that they will be treated fairly. Court proceedings offer an opportunity for your child to see the connection between what was done to them and the consequences to the offender. The court can also help your child feel protected and assured that the crime will not reoccur. Since many cases are resolved with plea agreements, successful prosecution may be possible without the need for you or your child to formally testify in court.

dealing with the future

Right now you are going through a difficult time. It may help to remind yourself that the intensity of your feelings will diminish over time. Do not dwell on the incident. Let your child determine when, if ever, it is discussed. Your goal should be to have everything return to normal as soon as possible. Try to set aside your fears and avoid a tendency to become over-protective.

It may be time to seek professional counseling if you notice your child seems unusually upset or shows signs of emotional distress such as sleeping difficulty, changes in appetite or school performance, withdrawal from social contacts, etc.

victim assistance is here to help



Victim Assistance Services are available to help you and your child overcome the emotional impact of the crime. The crime may also have an emotional impact on other family members. Family conflicts may surface

due to the related stress. Sometimes family members resent the extra attention given to the victim. If your family is having trouble dealing with what has happened, please remember that Victim Assistance is here for all of you as well as the victim.

Police questioning and court appearances can be frightening to anyone, but especially to a child. Victim Assistance caseworkers are available to explain the legal process, be present at police interviews and to go to court with you and your child.

Victim Assistance also provides referrals to short-term counseling to deal with the emotional impact of being a crime victim. This counseling is available to both the victim and other family members who are affected by what has happened. Therefore, if you are having a difficult time handling your own feelings about this incident, it may help you to talk with a counselor. This is especially important if your feelings are interfering with family relationships or with your ability to help your child recover from this crime.

Victim Assistance is a free service provided by the City of Glendale to its residents and to victims of crimes which are investigated by the Glendale Police Department. To contact a Victim Assistance caseworker, call 623-930-3030.

other helpful resources...

West Valley Advocacy Center
(623) 930-3720

Prehab of Arizona
(480) 969-4024

ChildHelp USA
(480) 922-8212

CASA
(602) 254-9000

Westside Social Services
(623) 934-1991

Jewish Family & Children's Service
(623) 486-8202



when your child is a victim



Prepared by:
Glendale Victim Assistance Program
(623) 930-3030
6835 North 57th Drive
Glendale, Arizona 85301

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