

# Keep our swimmers safe!

## Awareness and Education Regarding Child Molestation

Suggested Reading: Darkness to Light – Confronting Child Abuse with Courage  
7 Steps to preventing, recognizing and reacting responsibly to child sexual abuse.  
<http://www.darkness2light.org/docs/Final7steps.pdf>

### Step 1. **Learn the Facts and Understand the Risks.**

#### **What is sexual abuse?**

- Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other.
- Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. This, of course, includes sexual contact. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or Internet.
- An agonizing and traumatic experience for its victims.
- A crime punishable by law.

It is highly likely that you know a child that is being or has been abused.

It is highly likely that you know an abuser.

### Step 2. **Minimize opportunity.**

- If you eliminate or reduce one-adult/one-child situations, you'll dramatically lower the risk of sexual abuse for children.

### Step 3. **Talk About It.**

Know how children communicate.

- Children who disclose sexual abuse often tell a trusted adult other than a parent. For this reason, training for people who work with children is especially important.
- 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.

Educate your parent volunteers and coaches.

## Talk to them about child sexual abuse.

- Support and mutual learning occur when you share with another adult.
- You raise the consciousness of your community and influence their choices about child safety.
- You may be offering support and information to an adult whose child is experiencing abuse, and may not know what to do.
- You put potential abusers on notice that you are paying attention.

### Step 4. **Stay Alert.**

#### Learn the Signs

- Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, although redness, rashes or swelling in the genital area, urinary tract infections, or other such symptoms should be carefully investigated. Also, physical problems associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pain or headaches, may occur.
- Emotional or behavioral signals are more common. These can run from “too perfect” behavior, to withdrawal and depression, to unexplained anger and rebellion.
- Sexual behavior and language that are not age-appropriate can be a red flag.
- Be aware that in some children there are no signs whatsoever

### Step 5. **Make a Plan.**

- Don't overreact.
- Very few reported incidents are false.
- Offer support.
- Act on suspicions. The future well being on a child is at stake.

Child Abuse Helplines have staff specifically trained to deal with questions about suspected child sexual abuse.

Call Darkness to Light's helpline, 1-866-FOR-LIGHT to be routed to resources in your community, or call the Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate all the professionals (legal, social services, medical) involved in a case. If you're unsure about whether to make an official report or just need support, contact a children's advocacy center. The staff will help you evaluate your suspicions and your next steps.

- To find a center near you, contact The National Children's Alliance at [www.nca-online.org](http://www.nca-online.org) or 1-800-239-9950.
- Local Community Agencies, such as local hotlines, United Way offices, or rape crisis centers can often help.
- Talk to the child's parents (as long as they are not the abusers) and provide educational materials, such as this booklet. If the parents seem indifferent or unlikely to take action, call one of the recommended sources.

## Child sexual abuse is a crime.

### Know the legal requirements for reporting:

- All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Some states require that anyone with suspicions report it. Information about each state's requirements is available at the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/>).
- If you are a professional who works with children, (e.g., a teacher, a nurse) there are special procedures and reporting requirements you must follow. Your employer should provide mandated reporting training. You may be faced with a situation where you suspect abuse but don't have any proof. Suspicions are scary, but trust your instincts. Have the courage to report the suspected abuse.

### What if I'm not sure?

#### Where do I go?

- Child Abuse Helplines have staff specifically trained to deal with questions about suspected child sexual abuse. Call Darkness to Light's helpline, 1-866-FOR-LIGHT to be routed to resources in your community, or call the Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-4-A-CHILD.
- Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate all the professionals (legal, social services, medical) involved in a case. If you're unsure about whether to make an official report or just need support, contact a children's advocacy center. The staff will help you evaluate your suspicions and your next steps. To find a center near you, contact The National Children's Alliance at [www.nca-online.org](http://www.nca-online.org) or 1-800-239-9950.
- Local Community Agencies, such as local hotlines, United Way offices, or rape crisis centers can often help. The Children's Assessment Center in Houston is wonderful. Their website is: [www.cachouston.org](http://www.cachouston.org) and their phone number is 713-986-3300. Please review their website as well, it offers some of the same information but also includes local resources. If one wants to report abuse the CAC provided this number: TDFPS 1-800-252-5400
- Talk to the child's parents (as long as they are not the abusers) and provide educational materials, such as this booklet. If the parents seem indifferent or unlikely to take action, call one of the recommended sources.

## Know the agencies that handle reports of abuse.

### Two agencies handle most reports of child abuse.

- Child Protective Services  
(in some states this agency has a different name)
- Law Enforcement

Some states designate Child Protective Services as the agency that accepts reports of suspected child abuse. Others designate law enforcement. Some do not designate or designate both. Many states have tollfree lines that accept reports of abuse from the entire state. To find out where to make a report in your state, identify the Child Abuse Reporting Numbers at The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect website, <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/reporting/guidelines.cfm>. If the legal system does not provide

adequate protection for a child, visit the National Center for Victims of Crime at [www.nvc.org](http://www.nvc.org) or call 1-800-FYI-CALL for referral information.

Please NOTIFY your employer and [Board@swimwhale.com](mailto:Board@swimwhale.com) immediately!

I have read the material above \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name

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Date