

Why This Matters

We are proud of our safety record, however, our success cannot happen without you. Talking to your child about personal safety, sexual abuse, boundaries, and consent can be overwhelming, but research shows that children who are informed about their bodies and who feel comfortable talking openly with a trusted adult are less likely to be abused and more likely to disclose abuse if it happens. It's important to talk about these topics openly and often. Big Brothers Big Sisters is here to partner with you.



WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Any sexual behaviors that children do not give consent to, are not able to give consent to, do not fully understand, or are unwanted. Research tells us that 90% of victims of child sexual abuse know the person that abused them. Sexual abuse most often happens through **grooming**.

GROOMING

Grooming is when abusers gain emotional connection and trust from a child and parent/guardian and use this to manipulate them. This can include learning the wants and needs of the child and gradually making sexual behavior seem normal. This can happen in-person and online.

WHY DON'T KIDS TELL

DON'T KNOW IT'S ABUSE

FEEL LIKE THEY ARE TO BLAME

ASKED TO KEEP IT A SECRET

TRAUMA

BOUNDARIES & CONSENT

Protect your child from grooming and sexual abuse by helping them establish **personal boundaries**. Personal boundaries are rules that guide us in responding to what is ok or not ok for others to do to us, say to us, or do around us. Teaching your child that they are the boss of their body and that it is ok to say "no" to something that they are uncomfortable with is important.




DON'T HAVE THE LANGUAGE

TRICKED BY THE ABUSER

THREATENED BY THE ABUSER

SHAME OR GUILT

Signs to Look For

- ▷ HAVE SUDDEN BEHAVIOR CHANGES
- ▷ ACT AFRAID 
- ▷ HAVE TROUBLE SLEEPING
- ▷ BE SAD OR CRY OFTEN 
- ▷ START ACTING YOUNGER THAN THEIR AGE
- ▷ NOT WANT TO PLAY AS MUCH AS THEY USED TO
- ▷ HAVE PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL
- ▷ START TALKING ABOUT AN OLDER FRIEND
- ▷ BE ANGRY, DISRESPECTFUL, OR AGGRESSIVE
- ▷ NOT WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE
- ▷ START LYING OR KEEPING SECRETS
- ▷ GET UNEXPLAINED GIFTS OR PRIVILEGES 

HOW YOU RESPOND MATTERS!

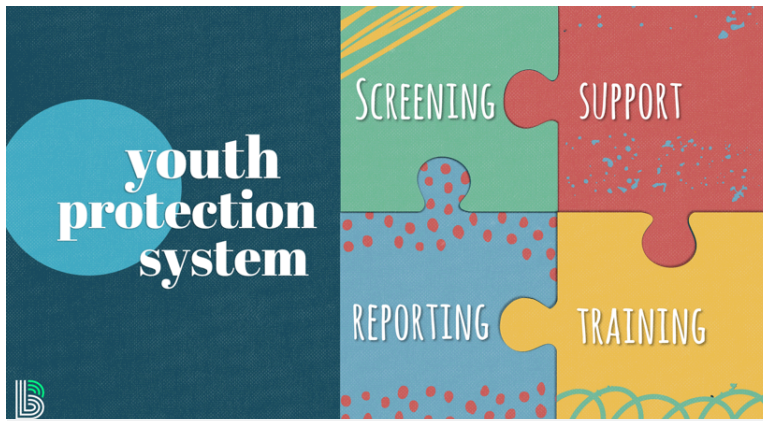
When parents learn about child abuse, it can be devastating and bring up a lot of different emotions.

Know that it takes tremendous courage for a child to share about abuse they've experienced. They can feel fear, guilt, shame, and confusion. They are going to look to you for cues that they will be ok, so how you respond is important.



Tips

- Stay calm.
- Believe your child.
- Let them talk at their own pace, let them know you will listen no matter what.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Be caring.
- Reassure your child that it's not their fault.
- Re-establish safety: contact the police, establish a safety plan, and find resources that may help your child.



BBBS ROLE

Volunteer Screening & Training

Before mentors are accepted into the program, they must undergo extensive interviewing, a thorough criminal history record check, submit multiple references, and complete a volunteer training.

BBBS Child Safety Policies & Guidelines

Our agency has child safety rules and guidelines to ensure kids stay safe. [Check out our handbook here.](#)

- A Big should never ask your child to keep a secret.
- Gift giving is limited and must be approved by you.
- In home activities at the Big's home must be approved and can only happen after 3 months of being matched
- Overnight activities are not allowed.
- Respect each other's boundaries when it comes to showing affection.

Mandated Reporting

Our staff and volunteers are mandated reporters. This means that if there is concern that any child in our program is experiencing harm, we need to report it. We encourage you to report any suspected abuse as well; don't let anyone tell you NOT to report suspected abuse to the authorities.



YOUR ROLE

Know BBBS Agency Guidelines and Policies

Our Community Based Program supports 1 to 1 mentoring relationships between adult volunteers (Big) and youth (Little).

Bigs spend time with their Littles out in the community doing free to low-cost activities.

Even though you don't go out on activities with them, you play an important role in making sure that your child stays safe. Make sure that you:

- Coordinate the scheduling of all activities.
- Get to know the Big.
- Talk to your child before and after visits with their Big; ask them questions about what they did together and how your child feels about the activities and relationship.
- If you have any concerns, we're here to help!

MATCH SUPPORT

Our Program Coordinators will check in with you every month to provide ongoing guidance and support.

It's extremely important that you maintain regular communication with our support team and understand the Child Safety Rules that we have in place. We encourage you to reach out to your designated support person anytime you have a concern about your child's match or well-being. We're here to help!

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<https://www.bigdefenders.org/your-childs-personal-safety/>