

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

APRIL, 2013

PROVIDED BY THE
KENT COUNTY SEXUAL
ASSAULT PREVENTION
ACTION TEAM

ARTICLES:

It's an Adult's Responsibility
to Stop Child Sexual Abuse

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Discloses Abuse

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Stand With Us Against
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Thank You YWCA Sexual
Assault Victim Advocates

Support New Business &
the YWCA Sexual Assault
Program

Free SAAM child sexual
abuse prevention posters
are available. Contact:
amy.bercher@kentcountymi.gov

It's An Adult's Responsibility to Stop Child Sexual Abuse

The Sandusky case puts emphasis on adults' duty to keep children safe.

The guilty verdict in the Penn State child sexual abuse case was good news for local child abuse prevention professionals. We are hopeful that the case's conclusion will embolden abuse victims - and the adults that care for and work with children - to speak up. Child sexual abuse can no longer remain a hidden problem that is kept secret with the intent of protecting institutions and abusers. Relying on arrests and prosecutions to solve this problem will not work. To stop sexual abuse we need individuals, family, community and policy that create safe environments for children. We need adults that recognize and respond to abusive situations appropriately and with confidence that they are doing the right thing. The Sandusky case sends a clear message that adults are responsible for their actions and their inactions.

Prevalence

Child sexual abuse is a stunningly common yet hidden problem. In 2012, Kent County victim service providers, the Children's Assessment Center and the YWCA of West Central Michigan, saw a combined total of 979 alleged victims of sexual abuse that were 12 years and younger. A staggering number made worse by the fact that most sexual abuse goes unreported. Studies on child sexual abuse in the U.S. consistently estimate that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused at sometime in their childhood. Research on sexual violence from the *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey* (NISVS) released by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010, reports that nearly 1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men had experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime. While 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men report being raped in their lifetime. Almost half of women surveyed reported the rape occurred before age 18. For men, almost 30% reported the rape occurred when they were 10 years or younger.

Forms of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a crime and an abuse of trust, power and authority. The abuse may contribute to long-term emotional and physical problems for the child. A person sexually abuses a child when he or she exposes the child to sexual acts or behaviors. Forms of abuse include: touching genitals, making a child touch the abusers genitals, sexual acts involving penetration, voyeurism, exhibitionism, showing a child pornography or using a child in the production of pornography, and internet-based crimes, such as creating or distributing sexual images of children online, stalking, grooming, and/or engaging a child in sexually explicit interactions online.

Based on law enforcement reports, over 95% of people who sexually abuse children are male, about 77% are adults, and 23% are other juveniles who sexually abuse children. Children are most often abused by people they know and trust. Abusers can be in positions of authority and held in high esteem by the community.

For more information visit www.stopitnow.org



What to Do if Your Child Discloses Abuse

What is disclosure?

Disclosure is when a child tells another person that she or he has been sexually abused. Disclosure can be a scary and difficult process for children. Some children who have been sexually abused may take weeks, months or years to fully reveal what was done to them. Many children never tell anyone about the abuse. In general, girls are more likely to disclose than boys. Younger children tend to tell a caregiver and adolescents tend to tell a friend.

Children are often reluctant to tell about being sexually abused. The abuser may have threatened to harm the child or their family if she or he tells anyone. The abuser may have told the child that their parents will get angry or that the child will be separated from their family if they tell anyone. In studies of adults that were sexually abused as children, 2 out of 3 said they never told anyone about the abuse during childhood.

What should I do if I suspect my child has been sexually abused?

If you think your child has been sexually abused, it is okay to talk to your child about it. First, it may be a good idea to access some resources to learn more about child sexual abuse. The link at the bottom of this page is a source for helpful information. If your child discloses abuse, your reactions in talking to her or him is important. Children that have supportive parents and care providers are better able to heal from the trauma caused by sexual abuse.

- **Stay calm.** Becoming very upset, angry or out of control will only hurt, not help, your child.
- **Believe the child** and let the child know that what happened is not her or his fault.
- **Protect the child** by keeping him or her away from the abuser.
- **Report** the abuse to local authorities immediately.
- **Get help.** It is important for the child to have opportunity for medical and mental health care.
- **Reassure** your child that she or he is loved, valued, and accepted by the family.
- **Keep your child informed** about what will happen next, including legal actions.

Do children ever lie about sexual abuse?

A child may try to “take it all back” or recant after disclosing sexual abuse. This is common because disclosing sexual abuse is difficult for the child and stressful for the family. The child may be fearful about disclosing what he or she promised to keep secret. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. Only a very small percentage of children recant because of a false statement.



To report suspected child sexual abuse:
Toll-free 1(855) 444-3911
Confidential · 24 hrs
www.michigan.gov/dhs



Not Even One!

Workplace Training to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

To schedule a training contact:

Jennifer Mckinstry
Children's Assessment Center
616-336-5191
jmckinstry@cac-kent.org

Amy Endres-Bercher
Kent County Health Department
616-632-7217
amy.bercher@kentcountymi.gov

This 1 hour training will assist childcare providers and other youth-serving organizations to create safe environments for children and employees by increasing awareness and adopting policies to prevent, recognize, and respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Training objectives:

- Increase knowledge of the prevalence of child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Increase understanding of healthy and unhealthy behaviors regarding child sexual development.
- Increase knowledge of how to respond to a child that discloses sexual abuse and mandated reporting.
- Decrease the risk of child sexual abuse by establishing clear policies for care provider interactions with children and establish protocol and mechanism for reporting suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Enhance the risk management plans of child care centers through the inclusion of workplace policy and staff training for the primary prevention of child sexual abuse.

KIDZ Have Rights!

Body Safety Presentation for Children and Teachers

KIDZ Have Rights (KHR) is a free program for school age children in 2nd - 5th grade. Presentations for children are 1 hour in length, except for 2nd grade that is 45 minutes. Children learn to identify three different touches (Nurturing, Confusing and Selfish) and how to identify safe adults in the family, school and community that can help them if they should experience a confusing or selfish touch. Classrooms receive a *KHR* poster and children receive a *KIDZ Have Rights* wristband or sticker. Classroom teachers receive educational reinforcement packets to continue prevention education lessons with the children. Parents of children attending the presentation receive the *KIDZ Have Rights* child sexual abuse prevention education brochure. *KHR* Teacher Training Video (14 minutes) is provided to all schools that schedule the *KHR* program. Teachers are asked to view the video prior to the presentation.

To schedule KHR contact:

Tanya Muehlbauer
Children's Assessment Center
Office: 616-336-4265
www.cac-kent.org/kidzhaveright.php



Mandated Reporters: Acting on Suspicion

- Austin walks into his 2nd grade classroom and sits at his desk. He looks at his arm to make sure his sleeve is covering the marks his mother left last night. He is too afraid to say anything, and doesn't realize that his teacher has already seen his arm. She is wondering what to do next.

- Megan anxiously waits for her soccer practice to be over. She has decided that today she will tell her coach what her step-dad does when he comes into her room late at night. She hopes he will know what to do. As she finishes telling her coach her story, he tells her that everything will be ok. He wonders what to do next.



It's time to dispel five common myths about reporting child abuse.

Which of the above stories should be reported? *The answer is both.* In the first story, there was a suspicion of physical abuse. In the second story, there was a disclosure of sexual abuse. Anytime a child discloses abuse, or an adult suspects abuse, he or she should contact Child Protective Services (CPS). In both of the stories above, the adult aware of the abuse was not a family member, but someone the child interacts with outside of the home. Both adults are mandated reporters, and have the responsibility to report what they know to CPS. The question is: What will they choose to do? Michigan law states that those who have "reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make immediately...an oral report." It goes on to read that within 72 hours of making an oral report, a written report should be filed as well (Child Protection Law, ACT NO. 238, Public Acts of 1975). The law was put in place to protect children, but it only works if adults act on their suspicion. Failing to report often

allows the abuse to continue, and sends a message to the child that the abuse they are enduring is okay. Mandated reporters who fail to report child abuse can be prosecuted. Reporting child abuse is not optional, it's the law.

5 Myths on Reporting Child Abuse:

Only those identified as mandated reporters are allowed to report child abuse.

While mandated reporters are required by law to report suspicions of child abuse, any person may report their suspicions of child abuse to CPS. The number for reporting child abuse is 1-855-444-3911.

In most cases involving child sexual abuse, the alleged offender is a stranger.

In children who are sexually abused, 90% of the time the abuser is someone who knows the child. The abuser builds trusting relationships with the child and their family, and often uses that trust to get the child to engage in sexual behavior with them.

If you can't prove the abuse happened, you shouldn't call it in to CPS.

Many adults have a difficult time contacting CPS unless they themselves are convinced the child has been abused. Our role as mandated reporters and concerned caregivers of children is not to interview the child ourselves, but to report our suspicions to CPS and allow trained experts to investigate the alleged abuse. As untrained adults question children, the actual facts become buried under their own assumptions and biases, and the truth becomes more difficult to obtain.

The family will find out who reported the abuse to CPS.

When a family is contacted because of concerns of child abuse in their home, they are not given the name of the person who reported it. Under the child protection law, those who report suspicions of abuse can do so confidentially as well as anonymously.

Most children that are abused come from lower income households.

While there are risk factors that can contribute to the child having been abused, child abuse does not discriminate. It affects all children, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or economic background. Any child can be a victim of abuse, just as any adult can be *the abuser*.

Rape Culture and Victim Blaming

Think about the last article or news story that reported the sexual assault of someone in our community. What were some of your initial thoughts? Did they include something like, "What was she doing out at that time of the night?" or "She is partly to blame because she got so drunk", or "She should not have been wearing such revealing clothing".

If you read the story online or on a social [media](#) post like Facebook, did you read some of the comments by readers? Do you see shock and disbelief by those who know the alleged perpetrator? "He is such a nice guy", or "This does not make any sense, he just would not do that". More often we read attempts by respondents to focus on the victim behavior to justify some reason to believe that it is a mistake or a false allegation. In fact, false reports of rape are no more than 2% of all reported rapes, and similar to any other false report of a violent crime. ([fbi.gov](#))

News media perpetuate this culture by reporting stories that affirm these thoughts and beliefs. After the Steubenville, Ohio high school football players were found guilty in March of sexually assaulting another student at a party, CNN news offered a story that focused on the 'poor football players whose lives were forever changed'. The story provoked sympathy for the perpetrators and did not talk about how the life of the victim was forever changed. Worse, there were attempts to discredit the victim by alleging that she has a history of lying which brought about a rash of victim blaming comments. This ignored the over 10,000 texts by others who witnessed the event and the pictures and videos that were part of the evidence.

The teen victim in Steubenville has received threats, lost friendships, and hate mail. Why do we blame the victim? It helps us believe that we are safer than the reality that many rapists live lives that intersect with ours everyday. They live in our neighborhoods, work at our schools and at the places we visit on a daily basis. We may have watched them grow up or have had positive experiences with them. We know people often in a certain context, but rarely do we know such private information about their feelings and respect for women or power and control issues. It can be scary to admit the reality. Our culture dismisses some of these behaviors of men and boys by saying, "boys will be boys" or "they just can't help themselves". But they can.

Parents of teens who experience a rape often have a hard time separating a poor choice by their teenager such as underage drinking or sneaking out at night from the violence perpetrated against their child. They focus on the behavior of the victim, not the behavior of the perpetrator.

Although it is difficult, we must change the conversation. Don't say, "Why did she...", ask, "Why did he.....". Change the focus of the conversation. Start by asking different questions. Talk to kids about respecting women. And most importantly, start by believing.

What is Human Trafficking?

Hidden in Plain Sight....

The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines the crime of human trafficking as:

“The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by *force, fraud, or coercion*, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age.”

“The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor of services, through the use of *force, fraud, or coercion* for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.”

Human trafficking is usually looked at as a problem that exists “over there” in other parts of the world. What most people don’t know is that it happens here too, it just looks differently. There have been reported cases of human trafficking in each state.

Another common misconception is that victims of trafficking are foreigners who are trafficked into the United States. Trafficked victims can be U.S. citizens or foreign nationals, men or women, and adult or child. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that there are between 100,000-300,000 children in the sex trade within the United States each year. This puts the total number of victims of trafficking (adults and children combined) into the hundreds of thousands.

Signs of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Is the person:

- Free to leave, or to come and go, as he/she wishes?
- Under 18 and is providing commercial sex acts?
- In the commercial sex industry and has a pimp / manager?
- Unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips?
- Working excessively long and/or unusual hours?
- Not allowed breaks or suffers unusual restrictions at work?
- Recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work?
- In control of his/her own money or bank account? Do he/she have own financial documents?
- In control of his/her own identification documents (ID or passport)?
- Allowed or able to speak for themselves? Does a third party insist on being present or translating?

For more information visit the Polaris Project at www.polarisproject.org

An Agency’s Response

The Children’s Assessment Center (CAC) of Kent County has provided services to child victims of suspected sexual assault for 20 years. When the CAC became aware of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children we knew that a response was necessary. Jennifer McKinstry, our Victim Advocate, is now taking on the additional title of Director of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Services (CSEC). Jennifer’s priority is to ensure that the CAC utilizes our agencies strength to respond to the sexual exploitation of children in Kent county. The CAC is in the process of developing a crisis response team that is made up of child advocates who will assist law enforcement with cases involving child sexual exploitation. These advocates will be with victims until they are able to be taken to a safe environment for treatment. The CAC currently has trainings on human trafficking and CSEC for high school students, organizations, and community members. Trainings promote awareness and create opportunity for response for those who are interested in next steps. Finally, the CAC hopes to continue to grow its partnerships with other agencies who are engaged in this issue as well, in the hopes that the exploitation of the children in our community will decrease.

For more information on CSEC, or to schedule a presentation for your group, please contact Jennifer McKinstry at jmckinstry@cac-kent.org

Against Human Trafficking and Slavery

Stand With Us...

Two thousand thirteen marks the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, a historic executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln that set the framework for abolishing slavery in the United States. With this monumental step as the start, slavery was made illegal in 1865 with the addition of the 13th Amendment—illegal, but not abolished.

*“What should move us to action is **human dignity**: the inalienable dignity of the oppressed, but also the dignity of each of us. We lose dignity if we tolerate the intolerable.”* – Dominique de Menil

Sadly, slavery still exists today. And it exists right in our own communities.

Today, the U.S. State Department estimates there are **20.9 million slaves** throughout the world—more than when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed into order. And, of those 20.9 million slaves—a significant percentage are American youth. In fact, the average age someone in the U.S. starts being sexually exploited or sold for sex is 12 years old.

But, it *can* be prevented. Organized criminals run the slave trade, but we—you, me, any person—need to be better organized than the slave owners. The more people who are aware of the issue, the more we can help uproot this atrocity.

At [Michigan Abolitionist Project](#) (MAP) we seek to do that. We exist to help others use their gifts and talents to help prevent and end modern slavery. We do this through education and awareness with three areas of focus: community engagement, training, and creative projects.

Committed volunteers throughout the state are leading initiatives such as, community groups, community outreaches, a freedom marketplace, and a running team. There is also a team (Hope for the Voiceless) that is producing a documentary on the demand for slavery and a team focused on corporate social responsibility. Through all of these initiatives and our workshops, we’re educating and raising awareness within businesses, faith-based organizations, health care facilities, schools and social service agencies. And we’re equipping community members to go out into their communities and educate.

We have made great strides, but we have so much more to do. And we need your help. Stand with us and put an end to this abomination of human dignity.

For **volunteer opportunities** email: Caitlin@MichiganAbolitionistProject.org

Visit us at www.MichiganAbolitionistProject.org for resources, ways to get involved, and to learn the signs of human trafficking.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
west central michigan

Sexual assault victims may obtain free and confidential services at the YWCA West Central Michigan. Web: www.ywcawcmi.org
24 hour crisis line: 616.776.RAPE or 616.776.7273

Thank You YWCA Sexual Assault Advocates

Since the creation of the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program (NEP) in Grand Rapids, victims of sexual assault who come to the NEP for an exam are accompanied by trained volunteer advocates. These volunteers interview for the position and complete 40-hours of comprehensive training as well as commit to taking a shift once a month for a minimum of one year. The volunteers take crisis calls at all hours of the night, weekends, and holidays and assist in arranging for exams, law enforcement, shelter, or other resources. Their role is to be an advocate for, and to provide support to, the victim and any family, friends, or support people who are present. Being a volunteer advocate can be a thankless job, but they are a vital part of the team along with the nurse examiner. With the expansion of the YWCA NEP to include providing pediatric forensic exams, these advocates also provide advocacy and support to children and families who come in for pediatric examinations. As part of April's Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we honor these volunteer advocates for their part in helping victims heal from the trauma of assault.

For more information on becoming a sexual assault advocate visit: www.ywcawcmi.org

Or contact Suzanne Katerberg, Volunteer Coordinator at skaterberg@ywcawcmi.org



Support New Business & the YWCA Sexual Assault Program

Lantern Coffee Bar, 100 Commerce, will have its grand opening downtown on April 26 from 6-10 PM. In celebration of their opening, they will be donating a portion of the proceeds to benefit the **YWCA Sexual Assault Program**. **Teal ribbons** celebrating Sexual Assault Awareness Month and other information about YWCA services will be available at the coffee bar that day as well.

You can find Lantern on Facebook or www.lanterncoffee.com

What is the Kent County Sexual Assault Prevention Action Team (SAPAT)?

SAPAT is a team of representatives from local agencies that work in the fields of public health, prevention education, youth services, domestic and sexual violence intervention, and law enforcement. SAPAT has been working on the primary prevention of sexual violence in Kent County since 1999.

For more information contact Amy Endres Bercher
Kent County Health Department
616.632.7217
amy.bercher@kentcountymi.gov



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
Caring today for a healthy tomorrow