

Confusing Touch: This can be described as a touch which causes confusion or uncertainty, fear or anguish to a child. A child may love their “family member” and they may like visiting the home often yet they may feel confused if this person tickles them on their private parts. They may not understand that this type of confusing touch is not safe even if the touch is described as a game the child may feel confused. A child may love their abuser, yet feel confused by the abusers touches, gestures, or words. A child may not understand that if they are shown pornography this is not safe. A child may be confused if their caregiver leaves the bathroom door open while they are using the bathroom or if the caregiver is bathing the child and touches them in an uncomfortable way then asks the not to tell or rewards them to a surprise if they keep the secret. A child may not understand if a caregiver is touching their own private parts while in the presence of the child. This can be confusing to the child. It can cause great emotional pain. Often times confusing touch may foster feelings of confusion if the child does not feel that the touch is hurting their body. Many children relate abuse to pain and do not distinguish between abuse which may not bruise or physically hurt. It is important to explain to the child that if they feel uncomfortable or strange there are safe grown ups who can help them. Talking about the list of grown ups can be helpful: naming family members, community members and school staff can be helpful. For example you may name the following as a helpful guide, mom or dad, grandparents, doctors, police, nurses, teachers, counselors or principals.

A GUIDE

Safe touch: This can be described as a touch that helps us to feel safe, comfortable and to be clean or healthy. It does not happen on your private parts as a game or as a secret. Private parts can be described as the mouth, vaginal area, vagina, or groin area, penis, the chest and the bottom or area between the legs. When educators are speaking to small children we discuss these areas as parts of the body which are often covered by a bathing suite or swim trunks when you swim and we include the mouth as well, explaining that we do not always want a person to kiss us on the mouth or that a kiss on private areas of the body is not a safe game to play. We differentiate between safe kiss, a kiss from mom or dad goodbye in the morning which allows us to feel comfortable and safe or an unsafe kiss, a bigger or stronger person wanting us to keep it a secret or a kiss that makes us feel uncomfortable. Please remember that the grooming process may begin with “safe touch” or confusing touches. A petting gesture which may begin with the hand, the back or the arms or legs may appear to be a normal affectionate gesture. These touches can confuse a child if the intention is sexual in nature. Always discuss feelings with your child as well. Explaining and asking the child the difference between their feelings and how they express them or how they get help if they need to. Include discussion about strangers and people you may love, know and trust. Approximately 90%) of children sexually abused are maltreated by someone they know and trust. Therefore, it is important to talk with your child about feeling safe and comfortable. If a child tells you they do not feel safe with someone believe them and help them find ways to get help or ways to feel safe. Do not force a child to be affectionate with anyone, if the child resists, including family members. Talking about boundaries or personal space can help children to learn how to delegate their own comfort level.

Bad Touch: This can be described as a touch which makes you feel unsafe, hurt, scared, angry, uncomfortable, pain, or confusion. Any touch which does not feel “right.” This could be a punch, a slap, a rub. If a child ever tells you that someone has hurt them, please make certain that you do not call the child a liar. It is our duty to report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child. It is not necessary for you to question the child nor investigate the disclosure, this is the duty of law enforcement or child protective services officials. It is your duty to report any reasonable suspicion that a child may be abused or neglected. Domestic violence against a child is child abuse, sexual abuse of a child is child abuse, neglect of a child is child abuse, and emotional abuse of a child is child abuse. Children who witness such abusive behaviors may also be described as victims of child abuse. The incidents may be traumatic and hurtful to a child. Punishment of a child which instills abuse can be a crime. If a child states that they are afraid to stay with a certain person, even another child talk to the child. If a child is rubbed or touched on their private parts of their body inside or OUTSIDE of their clothing this can be a crime. If a child is made to touch another persons private parts, this can be a crime. This touch may not physically cause pain, yet it may feel like a bad touch.

