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TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT CONSENT, BOUNDARIES AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: RESOURCE GUIDE

WHO CAN HELP?

- The Blue Bench Hotline (English and Spanish) 303-322-7273
- The Blue Bench’s Resource Line 303-329-9922
- Colorado State Child Abuse Hotline 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (264-5437)
- Safe2Tell 1-877-542-7233
- Colorado Crisis Counselors 24/7 at 1-844-493-TALK (8255)
- Suicide Hotline (988)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

If it is an emergency, call 911. They can ensure the immediate safety of a child and get medical attention if needed.

If it is not an emergency, call 844-CO-4-KIDS.

Report to the law enforcement agency in the county in which the abuse took place.

USEFUL ORGANIZATIONS

These organizations can offer help with:

- Having conversations with your kids
- Prevention tips
- Talking about body safety
- Safety planning for camps, day care, etc.
- Age-appropriate sexual behaviors in children and adolescents

National Organizations	Metro Denver Children’s Advocacy Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darkness to Light • Stop It Now • RAINN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denver Children’s Advocacy Center (Denver metro) • Ralston House (Arvada, Lakewood, Northglenn) • Sungate Kids (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln Counties)

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Uniting in Action – Developed in collaboration with high school students, educators, and this workshop empowers high schoolers in their role in shaping community responses to sexual violence.

Let's Talk About It – This middle school program focuses on healthy relationships, boundaries, and skill-building to become an active bystander for middle school youth.

Safe Bars– Workshop for preventing or reducing sexual violence in alcohol serving establishments

SHIELD (Sexual Harassment Intervention Education and Leadership Development) – Partnering with local businesses/corporations to offer workplace harassment training

Knowledge is Power– An overview of the problem of sexual violence and techniques that bystanders can use to keep their communities safer

Youth Empowerment and Safety– A program for parents and youth-serving professionals to learn how to identify and prevent sexual violence against young people.

Email preed@thebluebench.org to learn more or to schedule a program.

PERSONAL BODY SAFETY TRAINING AND ERIN'S LAW

Erin's Law, named after Erin Merryn, a childhood sexual abuse survivor, is legislation that requires public schools to teach children about personal body safety and sexual abuse prevention. It mandates that age-appropriate lessons be provided to students in grades pre-K through 12 to help them recognize, prevent, and report abuse.

The goal is to empower children with knowledge while also involving educators and parents in abuse prevention efforts. While a version of Erin's Law was passed in 2015 it is still not a requirement for Colorado schools to teach personal body safety on schools and it rarely is. You can learn more about Erin's Law at <https://www.erinslaw.org/>.

Every child deserves to feel safe, empowered, and heard. Personal body safety training equips students with the knowledge to recognize and report unsafe situations, helps school personnel respond appropriately, and provides parents with the tools to support and protect their children.

Let's work together to ensure our schools prioritize child safety education! Reach out to your school administrators, PTA, and school board to advocate for implementing personal body safety training. Our children's safety is not optional—it's essential.
Speak up today!

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EMOTIONAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND PHYSICAL SIGNS OF ABUSE

There may be red flags that indicate you should express concern that a child may be experiencing abuse

Emotional	Behavioral	Physical*
<p>Fear and anxiety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes anxiety-related physical symptoms e.g.: stomachaches. <p>Depression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent sadness or hopelessness. <p>Sudden mood swings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifts in emotions like rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal. <p>Perfectionism or academic decline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May become overly perfectionistic May start failing at school. <p>Fear of certain people or places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoiding specific individuals or locations Becoming quiet or distant around them. <p>Regression to earlier behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedwetting Thumb-sucking <p>Nightmares and sleep issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trouble sleeping Fear of the dark Other sleep disturbances. <p>Weight and appetite changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large changes in weight or appetite Eating too little Eating too much. <p>Suicidal thoughts or self-harm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly noticeable in adolescents. <p>Symptoms of PTSD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypervigilance Flashbacks Distress 	<p>Rebellious or destructive behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire-setting Harming animals Bullying others. <p>Behavioral issues resembling ADHD or ODD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported bad behavior <p>Keeping “secrets” with older individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing to talk about a “secret” shared with an adult or older child. <p>Inappropriate sexualized play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in developmentally inappropriate sexual activities with toys, dolls, or other children <p>Showing inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displaying or discussing age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or acts. <p>Withdrawal from touch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different reaction to physical contact from caregivers Avoiding touch from people they previously liked. <p>Substance abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimenting with drugs, alcohol, or other substances. <p>Running away</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving home Attempting to escape. <p>Overly protective of siblings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking on a caretaker role Showing excessive concern for siblings’ safety and well-being. 	<p>Unexplained Bruising or Injuries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bruises, cuts, or other injuries, especially around private areas, that the child cannot or will not explain. <p>Difficulty Sitting or Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discomfort, pain, or difficulty when sitting or walking <p>Bleeding, Swelling, or Discharge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unusual bleeding, swelling, redness, or discharge from the genital or anal area. <p>Frequent Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) or Yeast Infections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recurrent UTIs or infections without a clear cause <p>Torn, Stained, or Bloody Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly undergarments that may show signs of distress or tampering. <p>* It's important to note that physical signs alone are not conclusive of abuse but may warrant further evaluation, especially when combined with behavioral changes or emotional distress.</p>

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HOW TO BUILD A SAFETY TEAM

1. Identify Trusted Adults

Help your child identify 3–5 trusted adults they can turn to—both inside and outside the home. These should be people who listen, believe, and act in the child’s best interest. Involve a mix of people, a strong team includes people from different areas of their world.

2. Teach Body Safety Rules

Make sure all adults on the team understand and reinforce the child’s right to body autonomy, boundaries, respects their limits, and understands how to respond if they disclose abuse.

3. Encourage Open Communication

With your team members, create an environment where kids feel safe asking questions and talking about anything—especially things that make them uncomfortable.

4. Practice “What-If” Scenarios

Role-play situations so your child knows what to do if someone crosses a boundary or makes them feel unsafe. Reinforce that they can always go to someone on their safety team, and they should keep telling people until they are believed and supported.

5. Empower, Don’t Scare

Focus on building confidence and clarity, not fear. Let your child know that they are never alone and that they have a strong team ready to support them.

WHAT TO SAY IF SOMEONE DISCLOSES AN EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A supportive response can help a survivor feel believed, validated, and more likely to tell others or seek further support while a dismissive or skeptical response can deepen feelings of shame and isolation.

If someone discloses to you that they have experienced sexual violence, say these three things:

1. **"I believe you"** so they know they are not doubted, their experience is valid, and they feel safe. It combats the guilt and shame that comes from a society that often blames and doubts victims of sexual violence.
2. Tell them **"It’s not your fault"** to help them let go self-blame and remind them the responsibility is only on the perpetrator.
3. Ask **"How can I help"** to empower them, while maintaining their autonomy and reassuring them you will be there for them.

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