

## Why should I seek services?

- Sexual abuse is very confusing for a child. It's helpful to have support and assistance in understanding the abuse and reactions to it.
- It's helpful for the child and parent to sit down with a trained professional and talk through what has happened, to make sure the child understands and feels safe talking about their feelings.



- Children may blame themselves or hold other unrealistic ideas or beliefs about the abuse that needs to be corrected.
- Parents may also benefit from talking to a professional who can assist them in overcoming the distress naturally associated with discovering that their child has been sexually abused.

Acknowledgements: This project was supported by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance through a Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Norfolk Advocates for Children is a program of the Norfolk District Attorney's Office, in partnership with the NAC, a 501(c) (3).

The services provided at the Norfolk Advocates for Children are free of charge.

## Referrals

Please review the list of referrals provided by the Mental Health Coordinator for both you and your family. Please contact these providers directly to discuss specific information regarding insurance and appointment times. Wait lists can be long and it may help to mention that you were referred by the Norfolk Advocates for Children.

If you are worried that your child or your family is in crisis, you can also contact your local emergency crisis team:

**Boston Emergency Services Team (B.E.S.T.)**  
800-981-4357 (24-hour access) | Boston, Brookline

**Riverside Community Care | 800-529-5077**  
(24-hour access) | Canton, Dedham, Dover, Foxboro, Medfield, Millis, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Sharon, Walpole Wellesley, Westwood, Wrentham

**Aspire Health Alliance | 800-528-4890**  
(24-hour access) | Braintree, Cohasset, Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Weymouth

**CCBC Behavioral Healthcare Solutions | 508-580-0801**  
(24-hour access) | Avon, Holbrook, Stoughton

**Riverside Community Care | 800-294-4665**  
(24-hour access) | Bellingham, Franklin, Medway

**Norton Emergency Services Team | 508-285-9400**  
(24-hour access) | Attleboro, Taunton

If you need further assistance, please contact a Mental Health Coordinator at the Norfolk Advocates for Children: 508-543-0500

[www.norfolkadvocatesforchildren.com](http://www.norfolkadvocatesforchildren.com)

## Caring for Your Child and Yourself



**Norfolk Advocates for Children**



508.543.0500

12 Payson Road | Foxborough, MA 02035

[www.norfolkadvocatesforchildren.com](http://www.norfolkadvocatesforchildren.com)

*This brochure was created to provide you with information around how to best care for your child and yourself after your child's disclosure of sexual abuse.*

## **Signs shown by abused children are influenced by developmental maturity and age but can include:**

- Sudden changes in behavior (*increased irritability or anger*)
- Trouble sleeping and/or nightmares
- Increased separation anxiety
- Incontinence
- Regression to previous developmental stages
- Problematic sexualized behaviors
- Trouble concentrating
- Recurring physical symptoms, like headaches or stomachaches
- Fluctuations from shy and withdrawn to unusually aggressive
- Increase in reckless behaviors (*risk-taking by adolescents*)
- Emergence of intense specific new fears
- Startle or jump easily at certain sounds more than before

## **How can I help my child? \***

*The best predictors of your child's recovery are support from parents/caregivers and involvement in counseling.*

- Believe your child, and let your child know they are not to blame for what happened. Praise them for being brave and for telling about the abuse.
- Keep your child safe from the person suspected of the abuse.
- Resume your child's normal routine.
- Teach your child about okay touch, not okay touch and what to do if someone makes them uncomfortable.
- In addition to getting medical care, consider counseling for your child.
- Reassure your child that your child is loved and accepted. Don't make promises you can't keep (such as saying you won't tell anyone about the abuse), but let your child know you will do everything in your power to protect them from harm.
- Keep your child informed about what will happen next, particularly with regard to legal actions.

\* The National Child Traumatic Stress Network,  
"What to Do If Your Child Discloses Sexual Abuse" April 2009

## **How can I take care of myself?**

*Remember abuse affects you and your child and getting help for yourself is an important part of being able to help and support your child.*

- Ask for help, support, and understanding. Find opportunities to talk and keep in contact with family and friends.
- Consider counseling.
- Be honest about your feelings and reactions. Share them with a trusted person or group.
- Resume your normal routine.
- Try to eat regularly. Remember that sugar and caffeine can increase your stress level.
- Exercise can help alleviate stress and anxiety. Try to work it into your day, consider including your child and try to make it fun.
- Utilize strategies that previously helped you relax (formal relaxation techniques, listening to music, reading, playing with pets or your children).

