Important Facts

There are many different forms of child abuse and neglect. It can happen to any child, at any age, including adolescents. Here are some things that could be child abuse:

- An adult is hurting you physically, such as hitting you, especially if it is with an object.
- An adult is touching you in private places such as the breast or genitals, or having any form of genital or oral sex with you.
- One of your friends tries to have sex with you after you have said “NO.”
- A boyfriend/girlfriend is physically or emotionally abusive to you.
- You don’t have a warm place to stay.
- You don’t receive medical care.
- There isn’t enough food in the house.
- Your parents keep you out of school.
- Emotional abuse can happen if your caregivers are always mean to you and make you feel bad about yourself.

Adolescents are the group of people most often victimized in the United States. This is especially true for girls. Here are some things that you should be aware of:

- Adolescent girls are the most frequent victims of sexual assault.
- More than 50% of all rape victims are under 18 years old.
- One in 4 college women have been raped or have experienced attempted rape.
- 93% of juvenile sexual assault victims knew their attacker.
- Many sexual assaults are in the victim’s home or a friend’s home.
- The impact of rape includes physical trauma, genital trauma, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, psychological symptoms, or economic implications.
- Many teenagers experience a lot of problems after being sexually abused or assaulted.

These include:
- Substance abuse
- Depression and anxiety
- Difficulty with close relationships
- Suicidal thoughts
- Violent behavior
- Nightmares and difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches, stomachaches, and other medical problems
How can you prevent this from happening to you?

- Tell a trusted adult or friend if someone is hurting you emotionally, physically or sexually at home.
- Tell a trusted adult or friend if another person in your peer group is forcing you to have sex or hurting you physically.
- Never go out alone! There is always safety in numbers. Don’t hitchhike!
- Make sure that an adult knows where you are going and with whom.
- Be careful of the Internet. It is NEVER a good idea to meet a stranger with whom you have been communicating online.
- Be very careful about information that you put on Facebook or other social media.
- Never send pictures of yourself partially or fully undressed on your cell phone, even if it is to a friend or boyfriend. This is illegal and you could end up with a federal offense and in lots of legal trouble.
- Don’t go to parties or gatherings where there is no adult present. Although it may sound fun and very grown up, there can be lots of activities going on that you aren’t ready for, such as alcohol, drug use, and sexual activity.
- Make arrangements with a trusted adult before you go out with friends to be able to call for a ride if you find yourself in an uncomfortable position. This would also work if you have been using drugs or alcohol and feel unsafe to drive home. Remember, NEVER get in a car with anyone who has been using drugs or drinking.
- Don’t let food or beverages out of your sight! Someone may tamper with it by adding drugs.
- Remember that if someone abuses or assaults you, IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT!!