

Caregiver Toolkit: Youth Sexual Violence Prevention



Youth sexual violence can occur between two people in a romantic relationship or outside of a romantic relationship - a friend, classmate, school staff, acquaintance, or stranger. It can be sexual, physical, or emotional and may occur in person or digitally. It is important for caregivers to know how to keep the young people around them safe to prevent youth sexual violence.

How can caregivers identify youth sexual violence?

Here are some signs and symptoms caregivers should be aware of:

For more signs
and symptoms
[CLICK HERE](#)

- Unusual weight gain or weight loss
- Unhealthy eating patterns (like loss of appetite or excessive eating)
- Signs of physical abuse (like unexplained bruises)
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other genital infections
- Anxiety or worry
- Isolation or withdrawal, lacks desire to go to school or hang out with friends
- Feelings of depression (persistent sadness, lack of energy, withdrawing from activities they normally enjoy)
- Changes in academic performance
- Decrease in personal hygiene or attention to appearance
- Expressing thoughts of suicide, suicidal behavior, and/or self-harming behaviors
- Alcohol or drug use
- Secretive use of digital communication tools

How can caregivers talk to young people about sexual violence?

Here are some tips to help guide the conversation:

- Start by creating a safe and judgement-free zone so the young person knows they can talk to you. Set aside time when you know you can be fully present and attentive.
- Ask the young person where they feel safe and who they feel safe with.
- Teach them about characteristics of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and the importance of setting boundaries. It might be helpful to use media references as examples.
- Make sure they understand that they have the right to change their mind, to say "no", or to agree to some sexual activities and not others.
- Monitor your child's use of social media and digital communication tools. Ask them about the games they play and the apps they use. Be sure to talk to them about digital safety.
- Give them an opportunity to ask questions and be sure to answer honestly. Youth want factual information from trusted adults.
- Keep in mind that talking about safety should be ongoing. It is not a one-time conversation.

How can caregivers respond if sexual violence is disclosed?

If you believe a young person in your life has been sexually harassed or assaulted, it is important to let that young person know they have options and support from you and others. Ask them how they would like to move forward. Provide them with information on what some of the next steps might be, including talking to someone outside of the school system, talking with a counselor or therapist, or making a formal report with the school or police department.

Here are few resources caregivers can use to support a young person they believe may have been sexually harassed or assaulted in the District of Columbia:



Click the
underlined text
for electronic
access

- **Contact Support and Legal Advocacy for Youth at the [Network for Victim Recovery of DC \(NVRDC\)](#)**
Youth (10-24) seeking services can text (202) 849-6289
For non-emergency services call (202) 742-1727
Submit a [web form](#)
- **Contact the [DC Rape Crisis Center](#)**
For immediate support, call the hotline: (202) 333-RAPE (7273)
- **Contact [Safe Shores](#)**
For coordinated services to support children and families affected by abuse, call 202-645-3200
- **Contact the young person's school point of contact (POC)**
The following document includes the contact information for each POC by school [DCPS list](#)
If the young person attends a DC Public Charter School or Independent School*, contact the school directly.
- **File a grievance with the DCPS CARE Team**
Phone: (202) 442-5405
Email: dcps.care@k12.dc.gov
The following chart provides information on filing a [grievance](#)
- **File a complaint with the DC Ombudsman for Public Education**
Phone: (202) 741-0886
Email: ombudsman@dc.gov
- **File a report of sexual abuse and exploitation with the Metropolitan Police Department, Family Services Division**
Phone: (202) 576-6768
- **Report suspected child abuse to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)**
CFSA Hotline: (202) 671-SAFE

**Independent schools do not fall under the mandates outlined in the DC School Safety Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018 (SSOAA)*

Additional Resources for Caregivers

- To speak with someone who is trained to help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline
Phone: (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
Chat online at online.rainn.org
- For additional information on sexual violence and supporting survivors, visit the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)
- For more information on talking with a young person about safety from sexual abuse, visit [Darkness to Light](#)
National Helpline: (866) FOR-LIGHT (866-367-54448)
- For additional information on digital safety for youth, visit [Common Sense Media](#)
- To access an internet safety guide for youth, visit [Safe Wise](#)