

**if you suspect a child has
been a victim of sexual abuse**

• Always report any suspicions of child abuse

You may save a child from further harm if you report your suspicions. If you have questions or you want to report suspicions of child abuse, call the **Department of Children and Families** at: **(413) 775-5000** or after-hours and weekends, call the **Child-at Risk Hotline** at **800-792-5200**.

• Remain calm and thank the child for telling someone.

The child has undergone a potentially traumatic experience and could be more frightened by your response than the abuse itself. Be sure to thank the child for being honest and courageous enough to tell someone.

• Be sure to acknowledge that it is not the child's fault

Child abuse is NEVER the victim's fault. Children may feel ashamed and embarrassed or feel that they allowed the abuse to happen. Explain to the child that it is not their fault. The child is not to blame and is not in trouble.

• Encourage the child to talk openly

In abuse situations a child tends to not trust people as easily, because the abuser has violated that trust. But once a child discloses abuse, the child may feel as though a weight has been lifted off them. Encourage the child to talk freely with you or a trusted person about what happened without pressuring the child for answers.

CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS
child abuse affects the entire family.

Often times, caregivers will ignore their own needs once abuse occurs in a family. If you find yourself in the position of needing to care for a child sexual abuse victim and hold a family together, you must remember to take care of yourself as well. Talk to someone about the abuse, schedule self-care time, join a support group, or seek out a qualified mental health counselor for support and guidance.

Always know that the Children's Advocacy Center can make an appropriate mental health referral for caregivers too.



**To contact the
Children's Advocacy Center:**

Irene Woods

56 Wisdom Way
Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 475-3401

Northwestern DA's Child Abuse Unit

One Gleason Plaza
Northampton, MA 01060
(413) 437-5718



*Together, breaking the cycle
of child abuse.*

CACFranklinNQ.org



Children's Advocacy Center

of Franklin County and North Quabbin Area



THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FREE OF CHARGE:

FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

- A child-friendly, non-leading, non-traumatizing interview of a child victim is conducted in a neutral location and a comfortable environment to obtain an impartial account of the child's abuse that is accurate without causing further trauma to the child.
- The multidisciplinary team observes the interview from a separate room using closed-circuit technology.

MEDICAL SERVICES

- The Children's Advocacy Center is staffed by an experienced medical doctor specializing in pediatric and adolescent sexual abuse and forensic evidence collection.
- On-site emergency and non-emergency forensic medical exams are available to all victims of suspected sexual or physical abuse.
- All medical services are provided in collaboration with Baystate Franklin Medical Center.

COUNSELING AND REFERRALS

- Information and referrals for trauma-informed mental health treatment.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

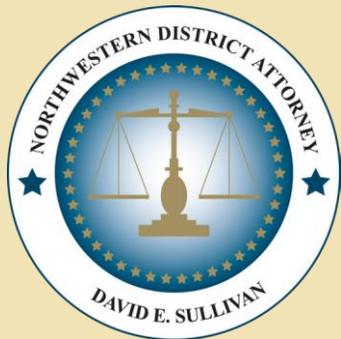
- The CAC provides outreach and education to end child abuse in our community.

ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Coordination, advocacy and support throughout the criminal justice process.
- Information on victim's rights including victim compensation and protective matters as well as general support for victims and their families.



- 90% of child sexual abuse victims are abused by someone they know, love and trust.
- 1 in 4 girls will be sexually abused before turning 18.
- 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before turning 18.
- 1 in 5 children are sexually solicited while online.



NorthwesternDA.org



MASSACHUSETTS CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

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