Dear Lisbon Parents,

Today your child participated in an Erin’s Law presentation about sexual abuse. We encourage you to continue the discussion at home. Talking about these lessons every now and then will help your child to remember them. It may also help you and your child to talk more comfortably about safety as they grow.

If you ever suspect that any child is being abused in any way, know that there is help for them. You might make a big difference in the life of an abused child. You might also help other children who are being hurt by the same abuser, or who would be hurt by them the future if you didn’t make the phone call.

We encourage you to learn more about how to keep your child - and all children - safe from being sexually abused. There is further information, as well as resources on the following pages. Please share this information with other adults and caregivers.

Thank you for caring about keeping every child safe!

Sincerely,

Angels René Brown, LCSW

Lisbon School Social Worker

**RESOURCES**

* If a child is in immediate danger, call 911
* To report suspected abuse, call DCFS Department of Children and Family Services 1-800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873)
* CHILDHELP: www.childhelp.org. The National Child Abuse Hotline: 800-422-4453 (800-4-A-CHILD)
* DARKNESS TO LIGHT: www.d2l.org. National Helpline: 866-367-5444 (866-FOR-LIGHT)
* STOP IT NOW! www.stopitnow.org. National Helpline: 888-773-8368 (888-PREVENT)
* RAPE, ABUSE, INCEST NATIONAL NETWORK (RAINN): www. rainn.org.
* The National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673 (800-656-HOPE) is also accessible through RAINN’s website.
* STOP THE SILENCE: [www.stopcsa.org](http://www.stopcsa.org)
* TEDDI BEAR CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER: videos, web links, downloads, and other resources <https://tedibear.ecu.edu/>

**SIGNS OF ABUSE**

*Child abuse can take place anywhere – at home, school, public places – wherever a child goes or interacts with others. It can take several forms, and cause long-lasting scars on the body of the child, as well as the mind. Child abuse can present itself in many forms, although some signs are not obvious or visible. The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect.*

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ABUSE WHEN THE CHILD:**

* Has difficulty walking or sitting
* Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
* Reports nightmares or bedwetting
* Experiences a sudden change in appetite
* Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
* Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
* Runs away
* Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
* Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ABUSE WHEN THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

* Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child’s contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
* Is secretive and isolated
* Is jealous or controlling with family members

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WHEN THE CHILD:**

* Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
* Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
* Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
* Shrinks at the approach of adults
* Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
* Abuses animals or pets

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WHEN THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

* Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child’s injury, or provides an explanation that is not consistent with the injury
* Describes the child as “evil” or in some other very negative way
* Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
* Has a history of abuse as a child
* Has a history of abusing animals or pets

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT WHEN THE CHILD:**

* Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
* Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
* Is delayed in physical or emotional development
* Has attempted suicide
* Reports a lack of attachment to the paren

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT WHEN THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

* Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
* Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child’s problems
* Overtly rejects the child

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WHEN THE CHILD:**

* Is frequently absent from school
* Begs or steals food or money
* Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
* Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
* Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
* Abuses alcohol or other drugs
* States that there is no one at home to provide care

**CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WHEN THE PARENT OR OTHER ADULT CAREGIVER:**

* Appears to be indifferent to the child
* Seems apathetic or depressed
* Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
* Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway.

Available online at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm>

**PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM ABUSE**

**HOW TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL ABUSE IN YOUR FAMILY**

* Learn the signs of possible abuse, and know how to respond.
* Talk with your children about their bodies. Teach them which parts of the body should not be touched by other people, and what those parts of the body are called. Inform your children that they have the right to refuse to be touched , or to touch others.
* Assure your children that they can and should talk to you immediately if they are uncomfortable being alone with someone, or if someone asks them to keep secrets from you.
* Talk with adult members of your family about the fact that an estimated 1 in 10 children is sexually abused before age 18. In environments that don’t have adequate safeguards, the proportion may be much higher. Encourage your family to learn how to recognize the signs of possible abuse, respond to children’s requests for help, report suspected child abuse to social service and law enforcement authorities, and help to prevent abuse from occurring.

**IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

* Ask representatives of churches, day care centers, sports programs, and other youth-serving organizations about their sexual abuse prevention policies. If they don’t have any, inform them about the importance of preventing opportunities for abuse by ensuring that any one-on-one activities can be observed and interrupted by others. If your children are active with such an organization, make sure that they are not placed in a potentially dangerous situation. If organizations already do have sexual abuse prevention policies, make sure that they use them.
* Break the silence that allows child sexual abuse to thrive. Share the facts about recognition, response, and prevention. Get help to heal from abuse that you may have experienced yourself. Be open to others who may choose to tell you about their own experiences. Help your community to move from an attitude of fear, denial, and secrecy toward a position of awareness, prevention, and support for recovery.

Source: <https://tedibear.ecu.edu/>