

NOW WHAT?

A CAREGIVER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

AFTER DISCOVERING A PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOR HAS OCCURRED

Your world has been turned upside down.
How are you feeling?



"I was all over the place. I was stressed, scared, and uneasy. It is okay to feel that way, and know that somebody else felt that way."

When a family learns their child has engaged in a problematic or illegal sexual behavior, they experience a large range of emotions. It is normal to feel confused, angry, guilty, ashamed, afraid, disappointed, or in denial about your child's behaviors. Your child's behavior could have occurred with a school-mate, a friend, or even within your family. The outcomes and the impact are different in each situation. When you have a relationship with the child victim, your response is particularly complex and you may struggle with how you respond. While it's expected that you're having lots of different emotions right now, basing all responses to your child's behavior on fear or anger can make

it difficult to move forward. Managing your own stress is essential. We've been there too! In this moment, we want to make sure you hear, "This is not your fault." What your child has done does not define who they are or make you a 'bad' caregiver. While it may not feel like it right now, your family will get through this.



NCSBY
www.ncsby.org

Who can I talk to about this?

When a child you care about has had problematic sexual behavior, it can be confusing to decide where to reach for support. You may be worried that your family or child will be judged for what they have done. It is a very personal decision to choose what you will share with others. While it is crucial to have support during this time, we would advise you to be careful with whom you share information. Unfortunately, due to widespread misinformation about kids who have had problematic sexual behaviors, sharing too widely may end up leading to social isolation for you and your child.

In some cases, required appointments will be vital to attend all required appointments with involved parties such as child protective services, probation, and the court system. Be mindful of the information you share with community partners. It is important to share what is needed about your child's behavior so they can best support you, while remembering that your child's information must be protected.

The treatment program may help to connect you with other caregivers who have been through a similar experience. Other caregivers in treatment "get it" because they've been there too! You may always share that your family is seeking counseling without providing too many details. The resource below gives more information on how to handle this complicated situation.

The National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth

<https://www.ncsby.org/content/parents>



What can you do while you're waiting for treatment?

Stress and anxiety can consume you during this time. Don't forget to care for yourself! Self care may seem difficult. There are a number of activities that will help to promote your own well-being. Some ways to engage in self-care may include empowering yourself by reading more about children with problematic sexual behavior. Below are some recommended resources to purchase or download digital copy for free:

"Taking Action: Support for Families of Children with Sexual Behavior Problems" by Jane F. Silovsky, Ph.D.

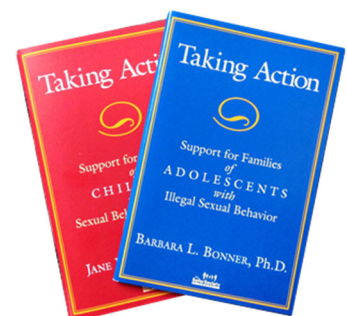
<https://safersocietypress.org/store/taking-action-children-download/>

"Taking Action: Support for Families of Adolescents with Illegal Sexual Behavior"
by Barbara L. Bonner, Ph.D.

<https://safersocietypress.org/store/taking-action-adolescents-download/>

The National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth

<https://www.NCSBY.org/>



Additional ways to engage in self care may include:

Journaling

Exercise

Meditation

Deep Breathing



Create Positive Affirmations

"My kid is still a good kid"

"I am a good caregiver"

"This is not my fault"

Practice Gratitude

Find and Use Your
Supporters

Find Normalcy
Engage in Usual Activities
with Supervision

It can be hard to cope!

How do you know if you need more support?

"We were completely isolated. We lost our church. We lost our social groups. It impacted all of us."

Movement toward support for a child can take over the full focus of a family. It is important to consider when you may need more support for yourself.



Signs that may warrant additional support:

- You notice your fear or anger is not decreasing, even with child treatment
- You are experiencing isolation, anxiety, hopelessness, or depression
- Your family or marital relationships are struggling or you are struggling to maintain relationships with your other children
- You find your own experiences of victimization or trauma have been triggered
- You think you need additional support

First, consider how you might utilize the support systems already in place around you. Is there a case worker, therapist, attorney, probation officer, friend, faith community, extended family, etc. you can lean on?

If not, consider seeking your own mental health support. Many communities have therapists that can provide help at a reduced or sliding scale rate if needed. The professionals involved should be able to help you locate an available community resource.



Stop It Now!

<https://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance/online-help-center/childrens-behaviors>

Remember, this period may be rough, but it's going to get better. You may lose friends or family support. Focus on those who you CAN lean on during this time.



"There is a huge disconnect between the way the legal system defined my child and the way the counseling program did. It is a child who made a poor decision."

What kind of supervision do you need to provide?

Some, but not all children, with a problematic or illegal sexual behavior will have to leave home. Know that many children may be able to safely remain at home. If this is the case, they do, however, need "eyes on" visual supervision while at home. Know that supervision requirements may sound strict but they will get easier over time. These rules are key to help make sure your child keeps the sexual

behavior rules and is set up for success. It is a process to re-establish trust and will take time. While you may feel like a "helicopter caregiver" at first, eyes on supervision will allow you to catch them being good and praise their progress. Find fun things to do together that both you and your children enjoy. Relationships can still grow during this time of high expectations and requirements.

What is okay for your children to do right now?

With appropriate adult supervision, children who have had a problematic sexual behavior can do most things they were doing before. It is important to maintain a sense of normalcy during this time.

- It is okay for children to talk to those who you have previously identified and discussed as safe people
- Work with professional support to establish a safety and supervision plan that promotes positive interactions with siblings and peers.
- Children can engage in normal activities that promote their well-being such as reading, listening to music, playing sports and games together, and watching TV and movies with appropriate supervision

Be sure to speak with your case worker, probation officer, or treatment provider to make sure you are adhering to any rules or regulations they have set forth for your child.

Consider reviewing more information on safety planning for your child:



<https://www.ncsby.org/content/safety-planning>

"My child became my constant companion for a little while."



What should I do about my kid's phone, laptop, tablet, etc.?

Electronic supervision is important. Youth are resourceful when it comes to electronics. Be thoughtful and use resources that have been created to support monitoring. These resources are frequently changing, so talk with your child's provider about current resources that can help support electronic supervision. Monitoring apps should never be used as a substitute for caregiver supervision. Caregivers who are concerned about specific apps like WhatsApp, Snapchat, Kik, or TikTok need to ensure that the chosen parental control app allows customized downloads rather than basing restrictions on a maturity rating alone.

Beware of multiple accounts.

Depending on the type of problematic sexual behavior the youth has been involved in, devices may need to be removed for a period of time. Consult with the professionals within your support system about what's most appropriate for your specific situation.

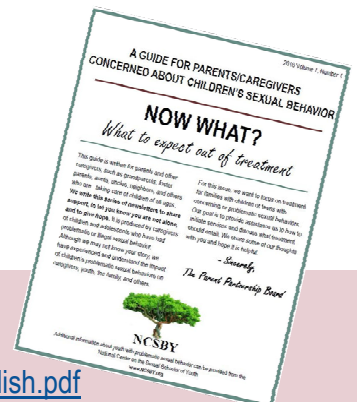


Consider reviewing more information on technology safety for your child:

<https://www.ncsby.org/resources#tab-1-internet-and-technology-safety>

How can I support my child through treatment?

Treatment length and content may differ depending on the age of your child and the kind of sexual behavior they engaged in, however, you should know that effective outpatient treatment does exist! Children who have participated in evidence-based treatment have been found to have less than a 3% chance engagement in these types of behaviors again. Treatment for your child may be done in a group format or individually with your family. Regardless, one of the most important components of effective treatment for kids with problematic sexual behavior is having YOU involved. Your willingness to be a support to your child is paramount! Your role to make this successful is to show up with a positive attitude and be willing to share. Speak honestly about your experiences and be willing to try out the strategies the therapist suggests for your family. Remember – you can do this! Healing is possible. We've been there and know that you can do it too.



2019 PPB Newsletter: What to expect out of treatment

<https://ncsby.org/sites/default/files/2019%20PSB%20Newsletter%20V1N1%20-%20English.pdf>



"My biggest emotion when first learning of the behavior was fear. Coming into the program was the first time we felt like we could be okay."

Concluding Thoughts

This guide is written for parents and other caregivers, such as grandparents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and others who are taking care of children of all ages. **We write this series of newsletters to share support, to let you know you are not alone, and to give hope.** It is produced by caregivers of children and adolescents who have had problematic or illegal sexual behavior.

Although we may not know your story, we have experienced and understand the impact of children's problematic sexual behaviors on caregivers, youth, the other children, the family, and others. For this issue, we have focused on making it through the early days after discovering your child has a problematic sexual behavior. We hope this guide is a helpful resource for your family.

*Sincerely,
The Caregiver Partnership Board*



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This project is supported by Grant #2019-MC-FX-K022 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice (OJJDP) Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.