

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Victim Assistance services are available to help you and your child overcome the emotional impact of the crime. The crime may also have an emotional impact on other family members. Family conflicts may surface due to the related stress. Sometimes family members resent the extra attention given to the victim. If your family is having trouble dealing with what has happened, please remember that Victim Assistance is here for all of you as well as the victim.

Police questioning and court appearances can be frightening to anyone, but especially to a child. Victim Assistance caseworkers are available to explain the legal process, be present at police interviews and to go to court with you and your child.

Victim Assistance also provides referrals to short-term counseling to deal with the emotional impact of being a crime victim. This counseling is available to both the victim and other family members who are affected by what has happened. Therefore, if you are having a difficult time handling your own feelings about this incident, it may help you to talk with a counselor. This is especially important if your feelings are interfering with family relationships or with your ability to help your child recover from this crime.



Glendale Family Advocacy Center (GFAC)
(623) 930-3720

Glendale Police Victim Assistance
(623) 930-3030

National Child Abuse Hotline
(800) 422-4453

Arizona Child Abuse Hotline
(888) SOS-CHILD
(888) 767-2445

Crisis Response Network (24 Hour Mental Health)
(602) 222-9444

Community Information & Referral
(800) 352-3792

Maricopa County Superior Court
(602) 506-3204

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**WHEN YOUR
CHILD IS A VICTIM**



GLENDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT

As a parent, you may feel angry, worried, upset or afraid if you discover your child has been a victim of crime. You may not have realized something had happened and finding out your child has been affected by crime can be shocking and difficult to understand. Many parents feel powerless and are unsure how they can help their child.

Every child and young person is an individual and may be affected in their own way. Different crimes can affect your child in unique ways. It is important to remind your child that whatever they are feeling is okay, that things can and will get better, and that there are many people who can help. Just like young people, it is also important for parents to be able to share their own fears and concerns.

INITIAL REACTIONS ARE CRITICAL

The reaction of those around your child is the single most important factor in how he or she will cope with being the victim of a sex-related crime. Immediately after the incident, provide your child with plenty of reassurance, comfort, affection and consideration. After the initial crisis, you need to find a delicate balance. You should not dwell on the issues or give it unusual amounts of attention, but you also need to be open to your child's questions and expressions of feelings.

HIDE YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Watch your comments, both those made directly to your child and those that your child may overhear. You may be passing on your fears, biases or shame to your child. Comments that seem helpful on the surface, such as *you must be angry or you must have been very upset* can set the child up for problems. Demands for revenge or threats about the offender can further confuse or frighten your child. Children do not want to see you get in trouble for something that happened to them. Also, be careful not to make your child feel that he/she *is ruined for life* because of the incident. Instead, assure your child that it was an unfortunate experience that they are able to overcome. Children are often so resilient that they can bounce back from bad experiences with little difficulty. Remember, your child may not be as upset as you are. In fact, most parents are much more upset about what happened than their child is.

CHILDREN AND GUILT

Guilt can be emotionally devastating to a child. Questions that start with the word *why* often add to feelings of guilt. Avoid statements such as: *Why did you talk with him/her; Why didn't you run away; or Why didn't you tell me.*

Even if you sincerely believe that your child used bad judgment, this is not the time to give a lecture. Keep in mind that your child did not ask to be victimized. Do not punish your child or try to make him/her feel responsible for the incident. Also, in your attempt to make some sense of what happened, do not blame yourself. The only person responsible for this incident is the offender.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE FEAR

Watch for creating a fear of the world or a fear/disgust of sex and bodily functions. Let the child know in simple terms that what happened was wrong and that the offender is a person with problems.

Empower your child by giving them the right to say no. Help your child understand that they have a right to keep their body private, they have the right to refuse any kind of touch from another person, and they have the right to say no to anyone who wants to keep something *a secret*.

If your child exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior, use a *good manners* approach to remold their understanding about what is and is not appropriate. Do not make him/ her feel bad about such behavior. The offender probably tricked your child into thinking it was okay.

RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S PRIVACY

Respect your child's privacy and feelings. Who you and your child tell about what happened is strictly up to you and your child. It is suggested that all adults who are told about the incident read this brochure so that they respond in a supportive, caring way. Some people may say things that hurt simply because they don't know better. Gossip and rumors add to everyone's stress. Consider telling supportive family members so they can provide needed comfort, support and understanding to your child.

UNDERSTAND THE COURT PROCESS

Most parents do not have a realistic understanding of how the court process works. They fear that the court experience will be traumatic to their child. Victim advocates are available to help you and your child through the court process. Victims also have specific rights under Arizona laws and the Rules of Criminal Procedure which ensure that they will be treated with dignity and respect. Court proceedings offer an opportunity for your child to see the connection between what was done to them and the consequences to the offender. Since many cases are resolved with plea agreements, successful prosecution may be possible without the need for you or your child to formally testify in court.

DEALING WITH THE FUTURE

Right now you are going through a difficult time. It may help to remind yourself that the intensity of your feelings will diminish over time. Do not dwell on the incident. Let your child determine when it is discussed. Your goal should be to have everything return to normal as soon as possible. Try to set aside your fears and avoid a tendency to become over-protective.

It may be time to seek professional counseling if you notice that your child seems unusually upset or shows signs of emotional distress such as sleeping difficulties, changes in appetite or school performance, withdrawal from social contacts, thoughts of suicide or self-harm, or substance use.



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