

Abuse Prevention

David Douglas High School

Winter 2020

In accordance with Oregon Senate Bill 856, we have been working with students in school to promote healthy relationships, identify unhealthy relationships, and prevent sexual abuse. As a part of our continued efforts to partner with families and community members, we are providing this information so that we can join together in supporting our students to learn, grow, and thrive, both in high school and beyond.

Mental/Emotional Injury

Mental injury and psychological maltreatment are the result of cruel or unconscionable acts or statements threatened, made, or permitted to by the caregiver(s), which have a direct effect on the child. Mental injury can also be the caregiver's failure to provide nurturance, protection, or appropriate guidance.

Signs of mental injury may include:

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Extremes in behavior (extremely compliant, demanding, passive, aggressive, etc.)
- Not attached to the parent or caregiver
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (sucking thumb or throwing tantrums)

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person uses or attempts to use a child for sexual gratification. This includes incest, rape, sodomy, sexual penetration, fondling, voyeurism, etc.

Signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Trouble walking or sitting
- Displays knowledge in sexual acts inappropriate to their age, or even seductive behavior
- Brazenly avoids a specific person, without an obvious reason
- Doesn't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities
- An STD or pregnancy, especially under age 14
- Runs away from home

Research and experience have shown that children very rarely lie or make up details of an incident of sexual abuse that they have not experienced.

Physical Abuse

Oregon law defines physical abuse as any injury to a child that is not accidental.

Signs of physical abuse may include:

- Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts
- Is always watchful and "on alert," for something bad to happen
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt
- Avoids touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days

Neglect

Neglect is failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision or medical care.

Signs of neglect may include:

- Clothes are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather
- Hygiene is consistently poor (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor)
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations
- Is frequently late or absent from school

Oregon laws also recognize threatening harm, buying or selling a child, allowing a minor to enter premises where methamphetamines are manufactured, and exposing a minor to controlled substances that create substantial risk as forms of child abuse.

Characteristics of Sexual Offenders

- Often a person known by the victim/survivor of abuse prior to the event
- Minimize, rationalize, and deny their negative behaviors
- Manipulative in relationships
- May have experienced significant trauma or abuse in their own life
- Often male, often married, often religious

It is important to understand that there is not a single “profile” that fits all sexual offenders.

Grooming Behaviors

“Grooming” is a term used to describe behaviors of an abuser to develop a trusting relationship. Several grooming behaviors include:

- Going out of their way to gain trust of adults (especially parents of children)
- “Accidentally” touching, bumping into, or viewing others in the bathroom or changing clothes or “unaware” of personal space
- Having secrets, secret conversations, and secret interactions with children
- Taking on an increasingly involved role in the lives of children
- Insisting on various forms of physical touch

Things Parents Can Do

1. Be involved in your child’s life

- Show interest in their day-to-day activities
- Get to know the people in your child’s life
- Choose caregivers carefully
- Talk about media and safety and boundaries with cell phones and the Internet
- Know warning signs of abuse

2. Encourage children to speak up

- Teach your child about boundaries
- Teach your child how to talk about their body with appropriate terms
- Be available to actively listen
- Affirm that children won’t get in trouble for speaking up
- Ask open-ended questions

3. Report suspected abuse or neglect

Tips for talking with your child about preventing sexual abuse:

- ✓ Have multiple, regular conversations
- ✓ Discuss a variety of topics, not just abuse
- ✓ Respect your child’s preferences, while reiterating the necessity of the conversation
- ✓ Practice active listening, don’t interrupt
- ✓ Avoid judgment in tone, body language, etc.
- ✓ Use teachable moments for natural conversations

Resources

Websites:

www.childwelfare.gov

www.preventchildabuse.org

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

www.cdc.gov/features/healthychildren

www.oregon.gov/dhs/children

www.caresnw.org

www.rainn.org

Emergency:

911

Oregon Child Abuse Reporting:

1-855-503-SAFE (7233)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

1-800-843-5678

National Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

National Sexual Violence Resource Center:

717-909-0710