



**Office of Children
and Family Services**



**As you think
about child care...
make a visit...
ask questions...
then decide.**

Think About Child Care

Choosing good child care is important. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development. It takes time, patience and an understanding of what to look for when selecting child care.

Learn about different child care options and visit sites before making a decision. Call and make an appointment. Look around the child care setting carefully. Watch how the children and adults relate with one another. Ask questions. Listen. Check references.

Once you have selected a child care setting and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Always check to make sure the program meets the needs of your family. It's a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

Selecting child care is an important step in the life of your child. You know the needs of your child and family. Don't settle for less. Your decision will make a big difference in your child's development, health and happiness.

Think About Child Care Checklist

To receive the checklist to help you select child care, call the New York State Parents' Connection at **(800) 345-KIDS** or visit **ocfs.ny.gov**.

- *As You Think About Child Care for Your Infant and Toddler*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your 3- to 5-Year-Old*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your School-Age Child*

Think About Family Needs

The cost of care, program hours and transportation are important things to consider when selecting child care. Make sure the policies and rules of the child care program are available in writing. Contact your county department of social services to see if you qualify for a subsidy to help pay for child care.

Learn more about child care options in your community by calling the local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R). The local CCR&R is listed in the “yellow pages” under child care. To learn about the licensing history of any regulated program visit **ocfs.ny.gov** or contact the local regional office by calling **(800) 732-5207**.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- What is the fee for child care? Are meals and snacks included in the fee? Is the fee charged when your child is not there? When is the payment due and are there any late fees? Are subsidy payments accepted? Do you qualify to claim the New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit?
- Is the child care program located near your home or office? How will you get your children to the child care program? What are the hours?
- Is the program currently licensed or registered by the state? If not, was the program licensed or registered in the past? What is the licensing history? Did you talk to other parents whose children attend the program?

Think About the Caregiver

A good relationship between the child, family and caregiver or teacher is important to everyone. The caregiver or teacher should have child care experience, education and/or training. The caregiver or teacher should enjoy talking to and playing with the children and communicate well with the parents.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Does the caregiver or teacher have experience caring for children? Does the caregiver or teacher seem to really like children, and do the children sound happy? Are the children's needs met quickly, even when the child care program is busy?
- Are children and parents greeted as they arrive? Are parents provided with a schedule of activities?
- Have mandatory criminal history background and State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment and Justice Center Staff Exclusion List checks been completed for the caregiver(s), teachers and everyone over the age of 18 living in the home of a family day care and group family day care?

Think About Safety

Minor injuries like scrapes, cuts and bumps sometimes happen to children. What steps does your program take to prevent accidents from happening and what plans are in place in case of an emergency?

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- How many children are enrolled in the program? Are the children supervised at all times, including naptime?
- Is the location childproofed and are dangerous materials stored out of reach of children? Has the child care setting been checked for dangerous substances like lead, radon and asbestos? Is there fencing or another sturdy barrier around pools, ponds and other bodies of water?
- Is there a working phone? Is there a plan for medical or fire emergencies? Are medical, police, fire and poison control emergency telephone numbers posted?
- Is the emergency evacuation plan practiced with the children at least once a month? Are there at least two separate building exits in case of fire? Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers or a fire detection system? Is the program prepared in the case of a Shelter in Place event? Does the program practice Shelter in Place drills? Are there adequate supplies in case of a Shelter in Place emergency?

Think About Health

To keep children healthy, the child care program should encourage good health habits and take steps to prevent the spread of germs. Make sure you know the program has an approved health care plan and ask to see a copy. Child care programs must follow specific rules to give prescription and over-the-counter medicine to children.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Is the child care setting clean? Are toys, furniture and floors washed frequently with a bleach solution? Are staff washing their hands before handling food, before giving medication, after going to the bathroom and/or changing diapers? Are the children encouraged to wash their hands throughout the day?
- How does the program's health care plan address children who are sick and the need for administration of medication to children who are sick? Can the program handle minor injuries? Is there a caregiver or teacher on site who is certified in CPR and first aid?
- Does the program provide healthy meals and/or snacks? Does the menu include fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, grains and milk products? Is the menu for meals and snacks given to parents in advance?

Think About Their Day

A child care setting that offers a variety of activities and experiences will help children develop skills for future school readiness. Look for a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play based on the abilities and interests of the children.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

Think About Active and Quiet Time

- Do children spend time outdoors each day? Is the indoor play space large enough for active play? Is there soft space for children who need quiet space and time? Is the space for naptime clean and large enough? Is there quiet space for doing homework?

Think About Learning, Thinking, Imagining

- Is there a variety of safe and clean books, toys and materials for the children? Are there enough of these available for the number of children? Are they culturally diverse?

Think About Talking

- Does the staff read stories, sing songs and name objects with the children everyday? Is there a variety of books, games, puzzles and magazines to help children use new words? Are television and videos used only for short periods of time and only for educational purposes?

Think About Discipline

Child care programs need to set limits for children. Those limits depend on a child's age and abilities. Children should be reminded of the limits without hitting or scaring them, hurting their feelings or taking away something important like food or rest. Corporal punishment is never allowed.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Is there a written behavior management policy that is given to each parent? Are parents asked to talk about and agree on appropriate discipline? Has the program set reasonable limits for the children?
- Are the children encouraged to get along with others and given gentle reminders when they do not? Are children encouraged to talk about their feelings? Are children encouraged to use their words? Is there a lot of space, a variety of interesting things to play with?
- Are the babies cared for with a comforting voice and gentle touch? Do the younger children have enough toys so they don't need to share? Is cooperation encouraged among the older children?

Notes

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Office of Children and Family Services

New York Parents' Connection
800-345-KIDS (5437)

The Child Care Resource and Referral agency in your area is listed in **Yellow Pages** under "child care."

If you have concerns about a child care provider, call the
Child Care Complaint Line at
800-732-5207

To report child abuse and neglect, call
800-342-3720

Learn more about the responsibilities and services available to you as an employer of an in-home caregiver by reading **Pub. 4628, Kieran's Law** a brochure available at **ocfs.ny.gov**
or
800-345-KIDS (5437)

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will make this material available in an appropriate format upon request.



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Office of Children and Family Services

Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144

Protecting Children Against Sexual Abuse

**Say
No!**



**Office of Children
and Family Services**

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

Sheila J. Poole, Acting Commissioner

Definition

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse and maltreatment include situations in which the parent, caregiver, or another person legally responsible for a child under 18 years of age, commits or **allows to be committed** any one of the following activities:

- Touching a child's mouth, genitals, buttocks, breasts or other intimate parts for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire; or forcing or encouraging the child to touch the caregiver, or other person legally responsible, in this way for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire.
- Engaging or attempting to engage the child in sexual intercourse or sodomy
- Forcing or encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity with other children or adults.
- Exposing a child to sexual activity or exhibitionism for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of another.
- Permitting a child to engage in sexual activity which is not developmentally appropriate when such activity results in the child suffering emotional impairment.
- Using a child in a sexual performance such as a photograph, play, motion picture or dance regardless of whether the material itself is obscene.

In addition, it is a crime to give indecent material to a child.

Sexual abuse and maltreatment include such criminal offenses as rape, sodomy, other non-consensual sexual conduct, and prostitution.

Sexual Abuse

Good communication between the parent or caregiver and child is the most important step in protecting a child against sexual abuse. While talking with children about *anything* is sometimes challenging for parents and caregivers, talking about child sexual abuse can be even more difficult. This booklet is for caregivers who want a little help in finding the right way to talk about sexual abuse with their children.



Getting Ready

You might feel uncomfortable because you may not know how to begin, or because you feel you do not have the answers to all the questions your child may ask.

You may worry that you could destroy your child's ability to trust adults and share affection, or leave the child thinking that sex is "bad" or "dirty." You may be afraid of confusing or frightening the child by saying the wrong thing.

If you present the information as being a lesson in personal safety (*as when you told your child to walk facing traffic or not to touch a hot stove*), you will realize that the subject can be handled in a straightforward, matter-of-fact way.

How to Start

You can start by teaching your child that his or her body is special and should be protected. Begin as soon as you think your child is old enough to understand, usually at about age three. Start simple and keep it that way. While you should try to use the correct names for body parts, this is not a requirement. Using the correct names will help the child develop a healthy respect for his or her body. If you have trouble doing this, use other names — just start talking!

Do not try to cover everything in one discussion. Talking to your child about sexual abuse and personal safety should be an ongoing process. And, do not make a big thing of these talks. Be casual and informal, and choose a time when the child feels safe and relaxed. For example, talk to the child:

- while the child is playing;
- during a leisurely walk, or while riding in the car, or on a bus;
- while fixing a meal together;
- while watching TV, or
- when discussing events in the newspaper, on the news, or on the Internet;
- in connection with a remark made by the child; or
- while tucking the child into bed at night..



What to Discuss

When you talk is not as important as what is said. Here are the main ideas you should convey:

- You are special and important.
- Your body is your own.
- You have the right to say “NO!” if someone wants to touch you in any way that makes you feel uncomfortable, afraid, or confused.
- There are parts of your body that are private. You have the right to say “NO!” to anyone who wants to touch your vagina, penis, breasts or buttocks. You have my permission to say “NO!” even if that person is an adult, even if it’s a grown-up you know.
- Pay attention to your feelings. Trust your feelings about the way people touch you.
- If someone bothers you, I want you to tell me. I promise that I will believe you.
- If someone touches you in a way that does not seem right, it is not your fault.

Children need to know that the safety rules about touching apply all the time and not only with strangers, men or babysitters.

In many cases reported in New York State and nationwide, children are sexually abused by people they know and trust: relatives (*even parents or siblings*), friends of the family, and authority figures (*teachers, youth group leaders, clergy, etc.*). Sexual abuse usually occurs in places where children feel comfortable or safe, at home or in the home of a family friend.

Keep in mind: abusers seldom need to use physical force to get a child to participate in sexual activities. Rather, they take advantage of the child's trust or friendship and use threats to keep the activity a secret. For example, a child may be told that his or her parent or caregiver "will not believe a kid." Other commonly used threats are:

- "If you tell, I will hurt you."
- "I will hurt your mother."
- "I will have to go to jail."
- "The family will break up."

Unfortunately, abusers can use threats successfully because children are taught to believe and obey adults.



Other Rules to Follow

Children learn best when given simple rules to follow.

- Establish a set of family rules about personal safety and repeat them often.
- Include touching rules when you talk about other types of safety.
- Teach children that adults may not always be right.
- Remember that there are differences between what younger children and older children can understand.
- Play the “What If” game (*see next page*).



The “What If” Game

One way to help children protect themselves is to practice responses to potentially dangerous situations. That way, if necessary, the children can react properly and quickly. The “What If” game can make practicing easy and fun. Every time you play, say this to your child, in your own words:

“Your body belongs to you and you have a right to decide how and when anyone can touch you. If somebody tries to touch you in a way that doesn’t feel good, or doesn’t seem right, say “NO!” It’s even OK to shout and yell “NO!” then run away and tell somebody. If the first person doesn’t believe you, keep telling people until someone does. Always remember, it’s not your fault!”

Here are some “**What ifs**” to start you off:

1. **What If** something was bothering you and you did not know what to do about it? Who might be able to help you?

Answer: People you trust, such as a parent, caregiver, another relative, neighbor, teacher, school nurse, police officer, or clergy.

2. **What If** someone touched you in a way you did not like and offered you a candy bar, a brand new doll, or something else you really wanted so you would keep a secret?

Answer: Say “NO!” and tell someone.

3. **What If** a stranger offered you a ride in a shiny new car?

Answer: Never accept rides from a stranger.

4. **What If** you did not want to be hugged by a particular adult?

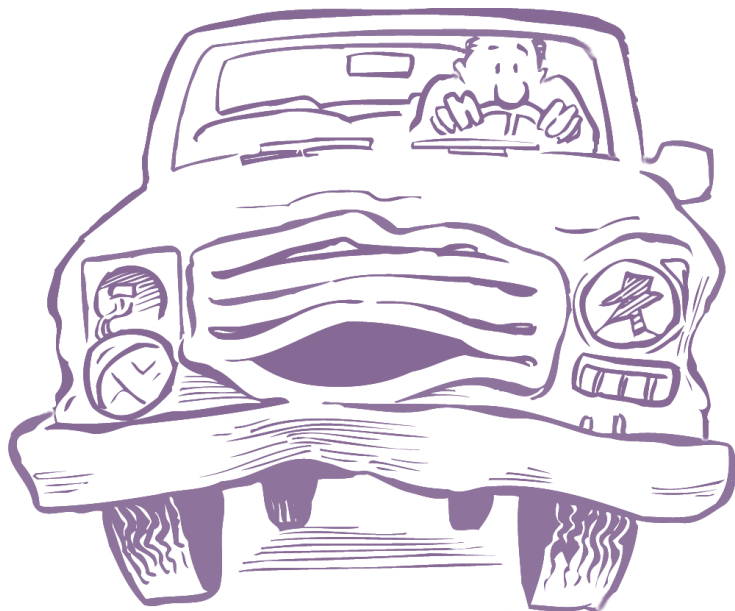
Answer: Say “NO!” to that adult. You may like the person, but you may not want to be hugged at that time.

5. **What If** you got a “bad feeling” or felt “yucky” when a grown up gave you a hug or a big squeeze?

Answer: Tell the person you do not like it. You have the right to decide when you want to be hugged or touched. Trust your feelings about the way people touch you.

6. **What If** someone you do not know comes to take you home from school?

Answer: Never go with a stranger unless the stranger gives you our special code word. *(Select a simple code word and teach it to your child. Make sure the child understands the importance of the word.)*



7. **What If** someone is tickling you and it starts to hurt?

Answer: Tell them to stop. If they will not stop, call for help. If I'm not home at the time, tell me about it later.

8. **What If** Mommy, daddy or a doctor touched the private part of your body?

Answer: There are times when others may need to touch your private parts. For example, mommy or daddy may touch your private parts when they are bathing you; or a doctor may need to touch you during an examination-but, if the touching hurts or bothers you, tell them.

Alternate: Grown-ups do not usually need to touch children in private areas unless it is for health reasons.

9. **What If** the babysitter wanted to touch you under your night clothes?

Answer: No one has the right to put their hand under your clothes, to force you to touch them, to touch your body, or to touch your private body parts.

10. **What If** your uncle (or aunt) wanted you to sit on his (or her) lap and if you do not want to?

Answer: You can say "NO!" to your uncle (or aunt) if, for some reason, you do not want to do it.

You can make up many more "**What ifs**" from your child's own everyday experiences, using familiar names and places.

Discuss only one or two per talk. But be sure to practice regularly so that your child learns to recognize when to say "NO!" and when help is needed. This will increase your child's ability to act quickly and calmly. Emphasize that the child always has a right to say "NO!" Children are safer if they know what to do when they feel threatened.

Just in Case

You cannot prepare children for every single type of situation that can occur. Caregivers must be on guard and observant at all times. Here are some signs that may indicate a child is being sexually abused:

- Unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Any changes in behavior, such as loss of appetite, nightmares, inability to sleep, or withdrawal from usual activities;
- Poor relationships with friends;
- Return to bedwetting or thumb-sucking;
- Genital disease; genital irritation or bleeding; or swelling, pain, itching, cuts or bruises in genital, vaginal or anal areas;
- Difficulty concentrating at school;
- Fear of a person, or an intense dislike of being left somewhere or with someone;
- Pregnancy;
- Aggressive or disruptive behavior, delinquency, running away, or prostitution;
- Self-destructive behavior;

If your child tells you that he or she was touched inappropriately by an adult or that an adult has committed any of the acts listed under the “definition” of child sexual abuse (*see inside front cover*), there are certain things you *must* do:

- Listen and believe your child. Do not deny the problem or blame your child.
- Stay calm! If you get upset or angry, you will frighten the child. Try to talk quietly with the child.
- Tell the child that he or she did nothing wrong. Sexual abuse is the fault of the abuser.

- Tell the child that he or she is safe and will not be harmed.
- Tell your child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
- Do not confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Call the authorities.

If you believe that your child has been sexually abused by a caregiver, parent, guardian, or relative, or by a day care provider or staff member of a day care program, call:

**New York's Statewide Central Register
of Child Abuse and Maltreatment**
1-800-342-3720

If you believe that the child has been sexually abused by someone who is not any of the types above, or if you don't know who may have sexually abused the child, call your local police or sheriff's department.

If you believe that your child has been abused in a residential facility call:

**New York State Vulnerable Persons'
Central Register (VPCR) Hotline at:**
1-855-373-2122



Other Resources

FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Helping Children Affected by Abuse: A Parent's and Teacher's Handbook for Increasing Awareness, by Angelo P. Giardino, M.D. (2007). G.W. Medical Publishing, Inc.

Helping Your Child Recover from Sexual Abuse, by Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay. (1992). University of Washington Press.

A Parent's and Teacher's Handbook on Identifying and Preventing Child Abuse, by James A. Monteleone, M.D. (1998). G.W. Medical Publishing, Inc.

The Safe Child Book: A Commonsense Approach to Protecting Children and Teaching Children to Protect Themselves, by Sherryll Kraizer and Mary Komblum. (1996). Fireside.

FOR CHILDREN

A Better Safe than Sorry Book: A Family Guide for Sexual Assault Prevention, by Sol Gordon and Judith Gordon. (1992). Prometheus Books.

It Happens to Boys Too, by Jane Santullo and Russell Bradway. (1987). Elizabeth Freeman Center.

It's My Body: A Book to Teach Young Children How to Resist Uncomfortable Touch, by Lory Freeman. (1984). Parenting Press, Inc.

My Body Is Private, by Linda Walvoord Girard and Rodney Pate. (1992). Albert Whitman & Co.

No More Secrets for Me, by Oralee Wachter and Jane Aaron. (2002). Little Brown & Company.

Secrets that Hurt: Sexual Abuse Activity Book, by Jim Boulden and Joan Boulden. (1993). Boulden Publishing

Something Happened and I'm Scared to Tell: A Book for Young Victims of Abuse, by Patricia Kehoe and Carol Deach. (1987). Parenting Press, Inc.

FOR ADOLESCENTS

Dear Elizabeth: A Diary, by Helen Swan and Gene Mackey. (1993). KIDSRIGHTS, JIST Publishing.

Everything You Need to Know About Sexual Abuse, by Evan Stark and Marsha Holly. (1995). The Rosen Publishing Group.

Telling, by Marilyn Reynolds. (1996). Morning Glory Press.

Top Secret: Sexual Assault Information for Teenagers Only, by Jennifer Fay and Billy Jo Fierchinger. (1988). ACT for Kids.



*This booklet was updated by the
New York State Office of Children and Family Services.*



Office of Children and Family Services

Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144

Visit our website at:

ocfs.ny.gov

For child care, foster care, and
adoption information, call:

1-800-345-KIDS (5437)

To report child abuse and
maltreatment, call:

1-800-342-3720

New York State Vulnerable Persons'
Central Register (VPCR) Hotline at:

1-855-373-2122

For information on the
Abandoned Infant Protection Act call:

1-866-505-SAFE (7233)

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children & Family Services will make this material available in an appropriate format upon request.

Together We Can Raise Healthy Children

Childhood Nutrition and Wellness

The foods children eat and lifestyle habits they learn have a lasting effect on their health. There are ways your child care provider is promoting healthy habits while your children are in care.

These are:

- Serving nutritious meals,
- Encouraging children to be active, and
- Limiting TV and other screen time.

Quality child care providers take steps to keep the children healthy! You can help your child by doing the same at home.

Partner With Your Provider

Together, you and your child care provider share an important role in setting good nutrition and physical activity habits for your children! Want to know how? Read on for more information.



Plan Healthy Meals

Look at your child care provider's menu.

- If you see fruit or vegetables that are new to you, think about serving them at home. Sometimes new foods take time. Offer new fruits and vegetables many times.
- Ask if your provider has a policy on healthy celebrations. Instead of cake and sweets for parties, you can bring yogurt and fruit to make yummy parfaits.
- Share your child's favorite healthy recipes with your provider to serve at child care.

Children Can Help, Too

Your provider may let the children help prepare and serve meals. Children can do simple and safe tasks at home too. They can wash vegetables, toss a salad, and set the table.

Children love to eat the foods they help make!

Here are more ways they can help at home:

- Plan meals together using new foods they tried at child care.
- Pour and mix ingredients, away from the stove.
- Chart how many different fruits and vegetables the family eats each week using stickers or drawings.

Eat Together!

Children see adults as role models, even at mealtimes. Your child care provider serves meals family style, which means adults sit with the children and:

- Eat the same foods,
- Teach children to serve themselves, and
- Talk about the healthy food they are eating.

Serving meals family style at home and child care allows children to learn how much to eat and be willing to try new foods.

Play... Play... Play!

Physical activity helps children's bones and muscles grow strong and lowers the risk of weight gain. Your child care provider's daily schedule includes:

- indoor and outdoor active play, and
- limits TV and other screen time.

Send your child dressed and ready for active play indoors and outdoors. Include coats, hat, mittens and boots to play outside in any weather.

Staying active at home is good for everyone in the family! Going for walks together or playing in a local park are great ways to enjoy activity with your children. Less screen time equals more quality family time together.



For More Information

about healthy eating and exercise, visit:

CACFP

www.health.ny.gov/CACFP

Let's Move! Child Care

www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org

Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings

www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/ewphccs.htm

QUALITYstarsNY; A winning beginning for all our children

qualitystarsny.org/index.php

Choose My Plate

www.choosemyplate.gov

Eat Smart New York

www.otda.ny.gov/programs/nutrition/

Core Nutrition Messages for Healthier Food Choices

www.fns.usda.gov/fns/core-nutrition/messages/default.htm

Physical Activity Guidelines for Children

nrckids.org/default/index.cfm/parentsguardians/

Child care regulations

ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/daycare_regs.asp

**CACFP**

Child and Adult Care Food Program
New York State Department of Health

When a child care provider joins the free Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), they can be reimbursed for serving healthy meals and snacks to children.

CACFP staff can help child care providers learn about CACFP and plan healthy meals.

Ask your child care provider to contact CACFP at:

Center-based programs, call

1-800-942-3858

Family and Group Day Care, call the Growing Up Healthy Hotline

1-800-522-5006

E-mail: cacfp@health.state.ny.us

To order more brochures, contact:

NYS DOH Distribution Center

21 Simmons Lane

Menands, NY 12204

Fax: 518-465-0432

b0019w@health.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Health

Division of Nutrition

health.ny.gov

NYS Office of Children & Family Services

Division of Child Care Services

ocfs.ny.gov



Together We Can Raise Healthy Children

