

About Child Molestation

Child molestation is the act of sexually touching a child. Today, 2 out of 10 girls and 1 out of every 10 boys has been molested. In fact, 13 million children are molested before they are 14 years old!

And most never tell because they are ashamed, are afraid of the molester, or fear no one will believe them. The fact is, 90% of sex abusers molest children close to them...family members, neighbors, or children of parents in their social circle, not strangers.

A typical child molester is also educated, working, married, religious, and well-respected, which may be why adults are often quick to deny or express shock if a child expresses discomfort, fear, or discloses molestation by a grandfather, step-parent, or other close friend or family member.

Every parent should ensure his or her child feels safe in disclosing abuse, takes accusations seriously, and seeks treatment from a qualified therapist. Can your child count on you to act?

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are “medically necessary.” This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists

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PROVING YOU REALLY CARE:

Healing Sexually Abused Children



Brought to you by the
California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists



HOW MOLESTED CHILDREN FEEL

When children are molested and they tell someone who doesn't respond (or they believe that someone knows but is allowing the abuse to continue), they get a clear message that they don't matter and no one cares about them. They believe the abuser's continued sexual gratification is more important than they are. They fear that if the secret is told it could break up the family.

Without treatment, victims of sexual abuse have many long-term problems, including sexual-risk taking, difficulty forming long-term relationships, depression, and suicide. The terrible secret can also tear apart generations in a family.

Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Sleep problems or nightmares
- A sudden interest in things related to sex, seductiveness
- Emotional withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Artwork and play that show signs of sexual molestation
- Unusual aggressiveness as the child tries to work out his or her frustration
- Degrading statements your child makes about his or her body
- Changes in eating behaviors (e.g. not eating, overeating)

Remember that children do not frequently make up stories about sexual abuse. If your child reports it, believe them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- Seek professional help.** Consult with a therapist who specializes in treating children who are victims of sexual molestation. A qualified therapist can help the non-offending parent to become a powerful ally and force for healing through family therapy and can recommend other appropriate interventions to help your child recover.
- If your child hints vaguely or directly tells you he or she has been sexually abused, assure your child it was the right decision to tell and that you will protect and help them.
- Take your child's allegations seriously.** Encourage him/her to talk freely, even if you feel uncomfortable about the things being said. Your supportive response to your child's disclosure is critical to her ability to heal from this trauma and trust adults again.
- Assure your child he is not to blame in any way.** Because kids are confused by actions of an adult predator, some children will believe they must have caused it or consider molestation a punishment for an imagined transgression.
- Consult with your pediatrician** who may refer you to a physician who specializes in evaluating and treating any physical problem related to the abuse.
- Report any suspicion of child abuse.** If the abuse is within the family, report it to the local Department of Child and Family Services or to the police.

OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 28,000 practicing Marriage and Family Therapists. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage them to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.

