

# Body Safety

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Presented By:

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**THE CHILDREN'S  
ADVOCACY CENTER**

OF NORTH & NORTHWEST COOK COUNTY

*Healing children one story at a time.*

## Adults are Responsible for Keeping Kids Safe

“It is vital that organizations create a culture where child sexual abuse is discussed, addressed and prevented.”

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention



# Agenda

- Overview of CAC services
- Erin's Law | Statistics
- Overview of URS body safety curriculum
- Mandated Reporting
- What to do if your child discloses to you
- Ways to keep kids safe



CAC provides free, healing services to children who have experienced abuse, allowing them to process trauma and reclaim their childhoods.



# About the CAC

- Serves 38 communities
- Forensic and Advocacy Services
- Trauma Informed Therapy Services
- Prevention Services
- Community resource



1 in 10 children are affected by sexual abuse to possibly as high as 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys<sup>1</sup>.



# Erin's Law



# Erin's Law

Efforts of a local woman, Erin Merryn, who was a survivor of sexual abuse.

Followed work of a task force made up of 19 professionals, appointed by then Governor Pat Quinn. Group included teachers, school administrators, researchers, DCFS, CACs, Rape Crisis Programs, law enforcement and attorneys.





# Basic Principles of Erin's Law

- Include techniques to teach children to recognize sexual abuse, equip them with skills to reduce their vulnerability and encourage them to report the abuse.
- Include more than one session, ideally at least four.
- Conducted at least annually, build on skills learned the previous year, and be developmentally appropriate for each grade level.
- Involve children as active learning participants.
- Have the capacity to be delivered by a wide range of personnel.
- Have an evaluation component with measurable outcomes.
- Culturally sensitive.
- Include an evidence-based curriculum.
- Include professional training for school personnel.
- Include a parent component.





# URS Body Safety Curriculum

# Body Safety

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- Feelings
- Helpers
- Body Part Identification
- Safe, Unsafe and Confusing Touches
- Secrets and Surprises
- Consent



# Feelings

Teaching children feelings vocabulary and identification will:

- increase their social-emotions skills
- allow them to re-regulate better
- help them identify their feelings as necessary signals worth listening to, not avoided. Thereby, reducing their risk of being exploited and increase disclosure.



Happy



Mad



Sad



Confused



# Helpers

- Outdated – “Stranger Danger”
- Reality – Most abusers are known by child
- By identifying family and community helpers in child’s life, you expand the number of people that child can disclose to in case of abuse.



# Personal Parts | Private Parts



- Changing a diaper
- Helping you go to the bathroom



- Helping bathe/shower



- Doctor's visit with a trusted adult present



# Safe touch, Unsafe touch and Confusing touch



A safe touch is one that makes them feel comfortable, warm and loved.



An unsafe or confusing touch is one that makes them feel hurt, scared or uncomfortable



# Secrets and Surprises

## Secrets vs Surprises



**Keeping a Secret** means not telling anyone, ever. This is not allowed, even if it's something fun.

**Keeping a Surprise** means staying quiet until the right time and then everyone knows.





# Consent

## **My body is my body and it belongs to me!**

I can say, 'No!' if I don't want to kiss or hug someone.

I can give them a high five, shake their hand or blow them a kiss.

I am the boss of my body and what I say goes!



# NO! GO! TELL!





# Mandated Reporting

It's not our job to prove someone has ill intentions, but to prioritize child safety!



# Who is a Mandated Reporter?

- Medical personnel
- School personnel
- Social service/mental health personnel
- Law enforcement personnel
- Childcare personnel
- Members of the Clergy (not in every State, YES in IL)
- As of June 27, 2012, ALL employees of higher education institutions became mandatory reporters, and are required to sign a form acknowledging that they understand the reporting requirements.



# Definitions of Abuse

- Any maltreatment of a minor
- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
  - Failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or needed medical treatment
  - Also alleged when an adult provides inadequate supervision of a child
- Sexual Abuse
- Also, when there is substantial risk of physical injury



# When DCFS Can Investigate:

- When the victim is under 18 years old
- The alleged perpetrator must be:
  - Parent
  - Step-parent
  - Paramour
  - Guardian
  - Foster parent
  - Immediate family member
  - Any person living in the home with the child
  - Any person who came to know the child through an official capacity or position of trust
- Any person who is responsible for the welfare of the child
- If a case does not contain all of these elements, the department has no jurisdiction and cannot investigate the allegation.

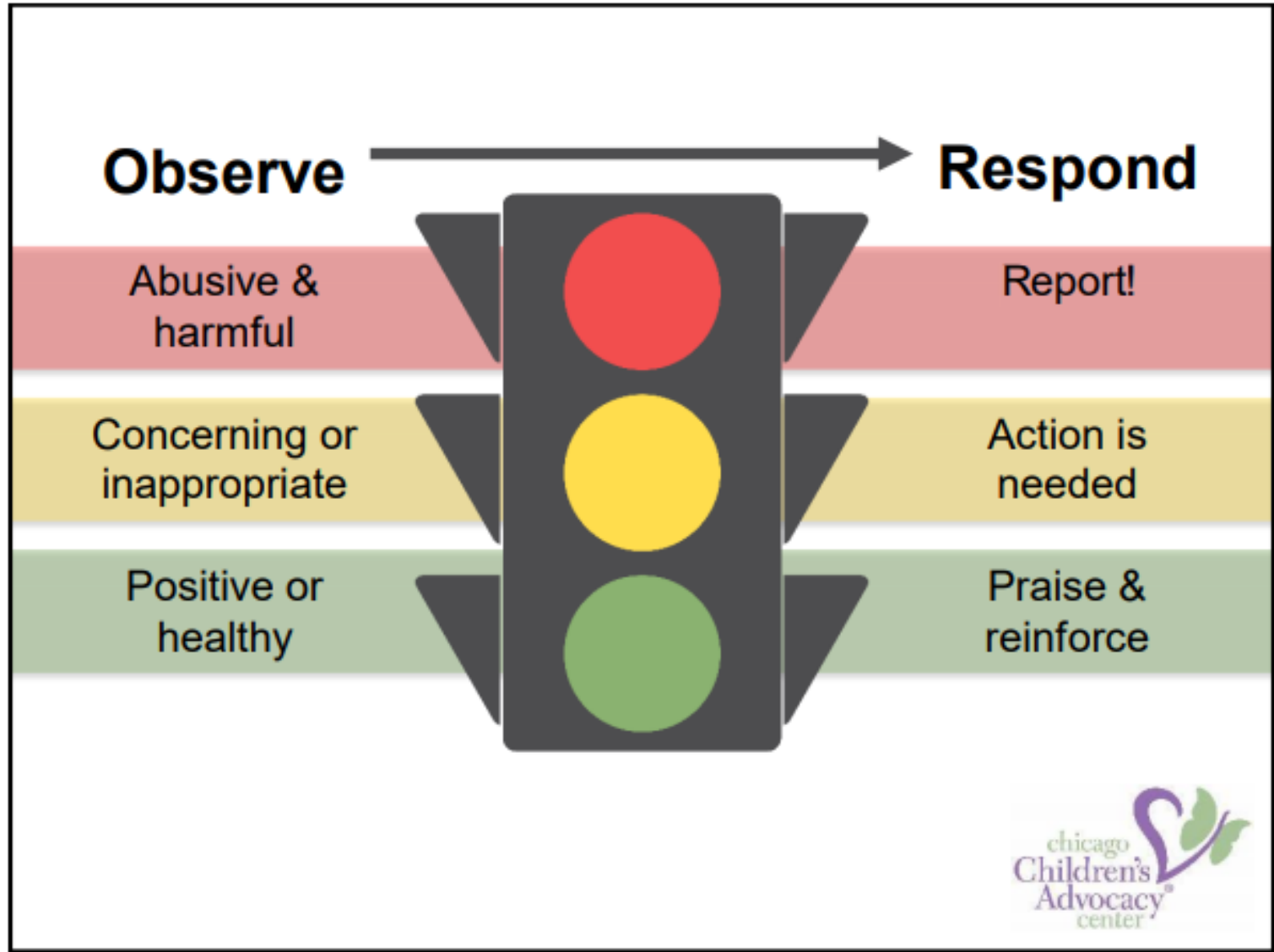


# When to make a report

- Per law, a report must be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adolescent has been abused or is in danger of being abused
- Actual abuse or neglect does not have to be confirmed, only suspected when there is “reasonable cause to believe” that abuse, or neglect has occurred
- Report incidents as soon as you notice them







# Behavioral warning signs

Hesitant about being alone

Unusual sexual knowledge

Sudden refusal to participate in an activity

Nightmares, bedwetting, regressions

Depression, anxiety, self harm



# How to make a report

Call DCFS at 1-800-25-ABUSE

- Reports should include the following:
  - Child's name, date of birth, age
  - Child's address and present location
  - Names & ages of siblings
  - Parent's Name and Address
  - Nature & extent of injury or condition
  - Statement made by the child
  - Name of Alleged perpetrator/relationship to child
  - Reporter's name & location
- Reports must be confirmed in writing to the local investigation unit within 48 hours of the Hotline call-Forms obtained from your local DCFS office
- If you don't have all of this information, you can create an account to fill out a report online.



# Facts about disclosures

- “My child would tell me”
- Shame/embarrassment
- Fear of abuser
- Worry parents will be upset
- Fear they will be blamed
- Young children accidentally reveal abuse
- School aged children tend to tell a caregiver
- Adolescents most likely to tell a friend
- Kids with intellectual disabilities exhibit behavioral changes
- Some don't understand it to be wrong- trust the adult



# Responding to disclosures

## DO NOT:

- Assume anything
- Suggest answers
- Bribe child with toys, snacks, etc.
- Make promises you can't keep

## ALWAYS:

- Praise the child for telling
- Reassure them it's not their fault
- Answer any of their questions as best you can
- If feeling overwhelmed by disclosure, seek support
- Take action and report



# Keeping Kids Safe



# Observe, Intervene & Speak Up

## Be Proactive

- Ask questions at daycare, school and recreation activities
- How is the safety of staff monitored?
- Why do you do things this way?

## Vulnerabilities

- Sexual abuse happens in isolation
- Children with disabilities are at greater risk
- Be aware of the “too good to be true” adult in your child’s life

## Trust Your Instincts

- Have a safety plan in place
- Call CAC with any questions about keeping kids safe
- Report any concerning behaviors leading you to believe a child is in jeopardy



# Safety planning

## Who can you talk to?

### Home

- Primary caregiver
- Sibling
- Close family friend/other relative

### School

- Teacher
- School Social Worker\Psihologist
- Principal

### Community

- Police officer\firefighter
- Crossing guard
- Faith based contact





# Resources to further the conversation

## FIVE SUPER Body Safety RULES

**I am the Boss of my Body**  
I don't have to hug, kiss, or be touched by anyone if I'm uncomfortable. I have a right to say 'No!'

**Private Parts**  
are the parts of our body covered by swimsuits and underwear. We use the correct words when talking about privates.

*Did you know?*  
Our mouth, eyes, and ears are private, too! They're sensitive and not to be touched by others.

**Privates are not to be shared with others** - no one should look at, or touch our private areas and we all should have privacy when using the bathroom or changing clothes.

**No one should ask us to keep a secret** even if it's fun and especially if it makes me sad, scared, or if it's about private parts.

*Sometimes we may need to be looked at or touched to stay clean and healthy. This should only be done by a caregiver or doctor - with another adult present. If you ever have a concern - you can talk to someone in your Body Safety Circle.*

**Surprises are OK** because they're only kept quiet for a short time and then everyone knows!

**I have a Body Safety Circle**  
3-5 trusted adults that know about body safety and I can talk to if I have a question or problem. I know that if a body safety rule is broken it's not my fault and it's never too late to tell.

## FIVE BODY SAFETY RULES

Every Child Should Know By Age 5

**My Body is Mine!**  
I am the boss of my body. I don't have to be hugged, kissed, or touched by anyone if I'm uncomfortable.

**PRIVATE PARTS**  
Are the parts of our bodies covered by a bathing suit and are kept out of view of others. We don't look, touch, or play games with each other's private parts.

We use the proper names for our private parts. They're not weird or funny - everyone has them!

No one should be asking me to keep a secret especially if it's about private parts.

**My Body Safety Circle™**  
I know five adults I can talk to if I'm sad, scared and definitely if I need to talk about body safety. If someone breaks a body safety rule, I need to tell until someone helps me. Even if I don't tell right away, I won't be in trouble - it's never too late to tell.



# Contact Info

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The Children's Advocacy Center of North and Northwest Cook County

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Safe from the Start

1535 Burgundy Parkway, Streamwood



On behalf of the kids & families CAC serves,

**THANK YOU!**

Learn more at [cachelps.org](https://cachelps.org)



# References and Addendums

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- <https://themamabeareffect.org/understand/understanding-abusers/>
- <https://themamabeareffect.org/free-downloads/>
- <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Little-Miss-Counselor>

