

Recommendations for Supervision and Parenting Children with Problematic Sexual Behaviors

Private Part Rules - Preschool Children (ages 3-6)

- No touching other people's private parts. (Includes kicking, hitting, biting, etc.)
- No other people touching your private parts.
- No showing private parts to other people. (or Keep your clothes on when other people can see you.)
- No looking at other people's private parts.
- Touching your own private parts when you are alone is okay. (or No touching private parts in public).

Sexual Behavior Rules - School-Age Children (ages 6-12)

- It is not okay to look at other people's private parts.
- It is not okay to show your private parts to other people.
- It is not okay to touch other people's private parts.
- It is okay to touch your private parts as long as you are in private and do not take too much time. (or It is not okay to touch your private parts in public).
- It is not okay to use sexual language.
- It is not okay to make other people uncomfortable with your sexual behavior.

Recommendations for Caregivers of Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

1. Close supervision is important when the child is with other children. Children, particularly young children, should have continuous visual supervision when with other children. Visual supervision means that a supervising adult can see the child at all times when the child is with other children. Continuous visual supervision is difficult to maintain and the family will have to work closely as a team to accomplish it. It is important that the supervision be accomplished without fail to insure the safety of other children and to prevent the behavior from becoming a habit.
2. The child should not sleep in the same bed with other children. Also, if possible, the child should sleep in a room alone.
3. The adults should communicate clear rules and expectations about privacy and appropriate sexual behavior to the child. It is important that all members of the family know and observe these rules. All children in the home should be included in a discussion of the Private Parts Rules and/or the Sexual Behavior Rules and a plan developed to deal with any touching problems that arise.

4. If the child has nightmares or sleeping problems, the child should be comforted and put back in his/her own bed or allowed to sleep in the caregivers' room in a sleeping bag on the floor (for young children).
5. The child should bathe alone and should take care of personal self-care in the bathroom without the presence of other children. If the child is young enough to need help with toileting, bathing, etc., an adult should provide assistance.
6. The child should not be given any opportunities for assuming a role of authority over younger or more vulnerable children. This means that the child should not babysit and should not be told to "watch" other children while a caregiver cooks dinner, runs a quick errand, etc.
7. Sexually explicit materials, such as magazines, videos, catalogues, and television programs, should not be available to the child in the home. Children should be monitored closely while they are on the computer to make sure that they are viewing appropriate material.
8. Adults should enforce privacy in the bedrooms and bathrooms. There should be established rules about entering the adults' bedroom (i.e., knock before entering). If engaging in sexual activity, the adults should take steps (i.e., lock the door) to ensure that children cannot come in or observe.
9. Adults should use modesty in the child's presence. There should be no nudity, partial nudity, or explicit displays of sexual behavior by either parent or other adults in front of the child. It is, however, appropriate for adults to show normal (i.e. holding hands, kissing, hugging) affection to each other and the children.
10. Rehearse the Sexual Behavior Rules with the family and talk about how it applies to different settings and situations.
11. Encourage your child to come to trusted adults to talk when they have questions or think about breaking rules. Praise them when they engage in positive behaviors with others.
12. Prevent sexual behavior with helping youngsters engage in other activities such as puzzles, games, or drawing and increase the children's physical activities, such as riding bikes, jumping rope, or skating. Develop a cue to remind them to follow the Sexual Behavior Rules.

Adapted from:

- Bonner, B. L. (1999). When does sexual play suggest a problem? In H. Dubowitz and D. Depanfilis (Eds.), *Handbook of child protection practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bonner, B. L., Walker, C. E., & Berliner, L. (1998). Final report on children with sexual behavior problems: Assessment and treatment. Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect.
- Johnson, T.C. (1990). Important tools for adoptive parents of children with touching problems. In J. McNamara & B.H. McNamara (Eds.). *Adoption and the sexually abused child*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine.