



# **Sexual Assault Response Services**

## *of Southern Maine*

P.O. Box 1371  
Portland, ME 04104

P.O. Box 1605  
Sanford, ME 04073

**24-Hour Hotline: 1-800-313-9900**

infosars@sarsonline.org  
www.sarsonline.org

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### **If Your Child is Abused**

If your child is sexually abused, it is you who will influence most how they deal with this trauma.

Here are some suggestions:

- Be calm. Your reaction makes a difference
- Believe your child. Too often children lack credibility. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. If you doubt your child, s/he may stop talking or deny the abuse occurred. Listen to your child in a non-judgmental way.
- Try to get the basic facts of the assault. Do not push for details at this time.
- Assure your child that in no way was the assault their fault. The child is not responsible for the assault, no matter what they were told by the offender. Assure your child of your love and the love of those around them.
- Tell your child what you plan to do. Explain about the crime of sexual abuse and that you are going to report the crime because this is the only way to stop the offender.
- Take your child to get sensitive, concerned and competent medical attention, especially if there is physical injury or possibility of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Get the appropriate outside help. Call the Child Abuse and Neglect Center and/or local police. For any type of sexual assault, call the local sexual assault center if you need to talk about your options or to receive emotional support.
- Be willing to talk to your child about the abuse. It will help your child to regain some control and dispel feelings of secrecy and shame.
- Consider seeking professional help for your child in order to allow them to work through feelings. This is especially important if the offender is a family member, or if you are unable to talk to your child due to your own discomfort.
- Encourage your child to resume their regular activities but honor your child's decision if they chose not to do any regular activity.
- Consider seeking professional help for yourself and other family members. Your feelings count too! By talking about your feelings around the assault, you will also be able to provide support for your child.

***Help, Hope, and Healing***