

Please, Have the Conversation for Prevention

Jacob Stapledon, Community Engagement and Education Coordinator, Children's Cove

Since 1983 in the United States, April has been National Child Abuse Prevention Month. One in four girls -- and one in six boys -- will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Most victims suffer in silence as it is estimated that more than 90 percent of abuse victims never report what happened to them. Even more alarming, more than 90 percent of perpetrators are someone that an abused child knows and trusts -- a coach, camp counselor, teacher, someone in their faith community or family member. 1 in 5 of all children in the United States will be a victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, parental neglect, domestic violence or sexual exploitation. Adverse childhood experiences such as this can increase the risks of injury, maternal and child health problems, teen pregnancy, and a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.

As the Children's Advocacy Center for Cape Cod & the Islands, Children's Cove provides compassionate, comprehensive, and collaborative response services at no cost to survivors of child abuse through its evidence-based programs, network of community partnerships, educational outreach and awareness efforts. Its multidisciplinary team works together to empower survivors, promote healthy outcomes, and help mitigate the stigma of child abuse.

We ask that parents and caregivers #HaveTheConversation with their children, their family, and friends about child sexual abuse. Yes, it's a sensitive conversation, but it doesn't have to be about sex or graphic details of abuse. For parents, it starts with talking to their children, early and often, about body safety and reporting. The idea is to keep it simple and create a comfortable conversation that allows children to know they can talk to their parents/caregivers about what we (adults) may see as difficult. By taking these small but important steps, it makes it easier for the children and increases the likelihood a child will report abuse if it occurs. You can learn some tips on how to start the conversation [here](#).

This month, and every month, let's work together to create a community where children are free of abuse, have a voice that is heard, and where they enjoy healthy, safe, and empowered lives. We are here to help. If you want to learn more, have questions or need assistance, please visit us at www.ChildrensCove.org