

► *Letter Continued*

It is the Center's hope that this information can be of assistance to you as you create ways to increase safety for your family and all children. A very large part of the work in preventing sexual abuse includes talking about it directly, and identifying and practicing safety skills. Prevention is the Center's goal, and remember, early detection and intervention is necessary if sexual assault has occurred.

Thank you for your attention and assistance in working toward eliminating sexual violence in our communities.

Sincerely,

Children's Response Center Staff and Advisory Board



Children's Response Center
Overlake Hospital Medical Center
1120 112th Avenue NE
Suite 130, East Building
Bellevue, Washington 98004

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER IS MANAGED BY HARBORVIEW MEDICAL CENTER.

PLEASE CALL CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER FOR MORE INFORMATION.
PHONE: **425.688.5130** WEB: **www.ChildrensResponseCenter.org**

Children's Response Center is committed to providing services to all individuals regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status or disability. Access and accommodations are provided to persons with disabilities and interpreters are available as needed.



LETTER TO PARENTS AND CARETAKERS

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER

LETTER TO PARENTS AND CARETAKERS

DEAR PARENTS AND CARETAKERS,

You, as a parent or caretaker, are very important. Children's Response Center would like to recognize the immense responsibility you carry for raising, educating and supporting children. Unfortunately, children in our society are sometimes witnesses to, or victims of, traumatic events, including sexual abuse. There are certain activities you, as a parent or caretaker, can do with children to help prevent sexual abuse.

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE CENTER SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:

- Maintain a close, open relationship with your child so she/he will feel comfortable talking and asking questions when feeling troubled or confused.
- Speak calmly when talking about sexual abuse and safety.
- Demonstrate interest in what your child does and where she/he goes.
- Know with whom your child spends time.
- Support all children in feeling strong and self-confident.
- Listen, believe and trust what your child tells you.
- Trust your intuition. If something does not feel right, act on it.

ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS OR CARETAKERS TO DO WITH CHILDREN:

- Have ongoing conversations about safe and unsafe touching.
- Talk about different types of secrets, and encourage your child to talk about secrets that make her/him feel bad or uncomfortable.
- Teach your child that she/he has the right to be safe, and to say "NO" if that right is being taken away. Create examples for your child and practice saying "NO."
- Review safety strategies with your child that she/he is learning in school.
- Read books with your child about assault prevention and self-esteem.
- Monitor your child's access to the Internet.
- Talk about Internet safety concerns.
- Help your child identify safe and supportive people.
- Encourage your child to talk with you or one of her/his support people about problems.
- Evaluate your child's walking routes and decide which ones are safer than others.
- Teach your child correct anatomical names for body parts.

ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS OR CARETAKERS:

- Increase awareness about the people in your neighborhood, school or community who have access to your child.
- Become more comfortable when talking about your body and your child's body so your child will know it is OK to talk with you when she/he feels confused or scared.
- Increase your knowledge of normal child development so you will be better able to monitor concerning behaviors.
- Be wary of older children or adults who want to spend a great deal of time alone with your child.
- Seek information about the subject of sexual assault from local agencies.
- Check out books about the subject of sexual assault from your local library.
- Assist in developing a "block watch" in your neighborhood to increase the level of safety for all children and families living there.
- Talk about child abuse prevention and safety with other parents and caretakers.
- Request and attend an educational meeting from your Parent, Teacher and Student Association to learn more about prevention of sexual assault and safety for children and families.
- Get to know your child's friends and the households in which she/he plays.
- Request information and references from babysitters and others who care for your child.
- Educate yourself about behaviors of sex offenders, including "grooming", that put children at risk for abuse.

Sometimes sexual abuse occurs despite our best efforts. Please do not be afraid to ask for support from those you trust if sexual abuse occurs in your family or to someone you know. The following guidelines may assist you with responding to a disclosure of sexual abuse:

- Remain calm while your child is talking with you.
- Encourage your child to talk freely.
- Refrain from making judgmental comments.
- Show that you understand and take seriously what your child is saying.
- Assure your child that she/he did the right thing by telling.
- Tell your child that she/he is not to blame.
- Consult with your pediatrician or family physician.
- Be thankful that your child was able to tell you or another person about the abuse.
- Call Child Protective Services or the police to report the abuse.
- Call Children's Response Center for assistance if you are concerned that sexual abuse may have occurred or you have questions about making that determination.
- Call an information and referral line to talk with someone who will listen and assist you.