My Heavy Secret





A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators

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A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators

This guide contains discussions of child sexual abuse (CSA). While the focus is on supporting the children in your care, this guide may bring up difficult feelings and memories of your own experiences or the experiences of someone close to you. If you or someone you know needs support, we strongly recommend contacting one of the services listed on page 33.

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Introduction

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a difficult topic we need to talk about. It affects many children in our communities, and with suitable support, we can create a positive ripple effect throughout our communities.

Rates of CSA in Nunavut are up to 10 times the national average. Because CSA can affect individuals and families across communities, it is possible that someone you know has experienced abuse or that someone in your community may have caused harm.

This guide provides information about CSA and its effects on children, with a strong focus on children aged 10 and under. You will learn six important topics related to CSA:

1. Definitions and language
2. Signs
3. Responding safely to concerns and/or disclosures
4. Reporting
5. Learning to apply preventive measures that help keep children safe
6. Supporting a child through recovery

The Resources section on pages 33–36 includes contact information for support services and educational materials if you want to learn more. We hope this guide will help you feel confident in your ability to support and protect the children in your life.



What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

CSA is any sexual act between a minor and an adult. It is also any sexual act between two minors, with one minor exerting power over the other. A sexual act includes contact and non-contact activities, like sexual intercourse, sexual molestation, exhibitionism, sexual conversations, and sexual exploitation.

CSA also happens online. Exposing a minor to pornography, for example, an adult sending sexual material to a child or children voluntarily sharing sexual materials with their peers, is considered a form of CSA. So is photographing children for sexual purposes and sexting. "Sexting" means sending or receiving sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos through messaging, email, or social media.

All forms of CSA can have lasting impacts on a person's well-being and mental health, even long after the abuse has ended.

CSA is a crime, and it must be reported.

Consent

Consent is required for a range of activities involving one's personal space and body, including sexual acts. Consent must be given freely without coercion or abuse of authority. It is important that the individual has the ability to properly understand the risks of what they are agreeing to. In most circumstances, children are unable to give consent to sexual acts.

There are laws in Nunavut that define who can give consent to sexual acts. There are three important factors of consent for Nunavummiut: the ages of the people involved, if one person is in a position of authority over the other, and if the relationship is exploitative. Here is a summary of Nunavut's consent laws:

√ If two children are under the age of 12, it is not an offence for them to engage in sexual activity with each other, as long as it is consensual.

X However, a child under the age of 12 cannot consent to any sexual activity with anyone older than the age of 12.

√ If a child is 12 or 13 years old, they can consent to any sexual activity with a person less than two years older than they are.

√ If a child is 14 or 15 years old, they can consent to any sexual activity with a person less than five years older than they are.

X No child can consent to any sexual activity with a person in a position of authority, someone they depend on, or someone in an exploitative relationship with them, regardless of the age difference.

Abusers, Predators, and Grooming

An abuser is someone who causes harm to another person. A predator is a type of abuser who deliberately seeks out people to abuse. "Grooming" is a tactic used by predators that involves slowly manipulating a person.

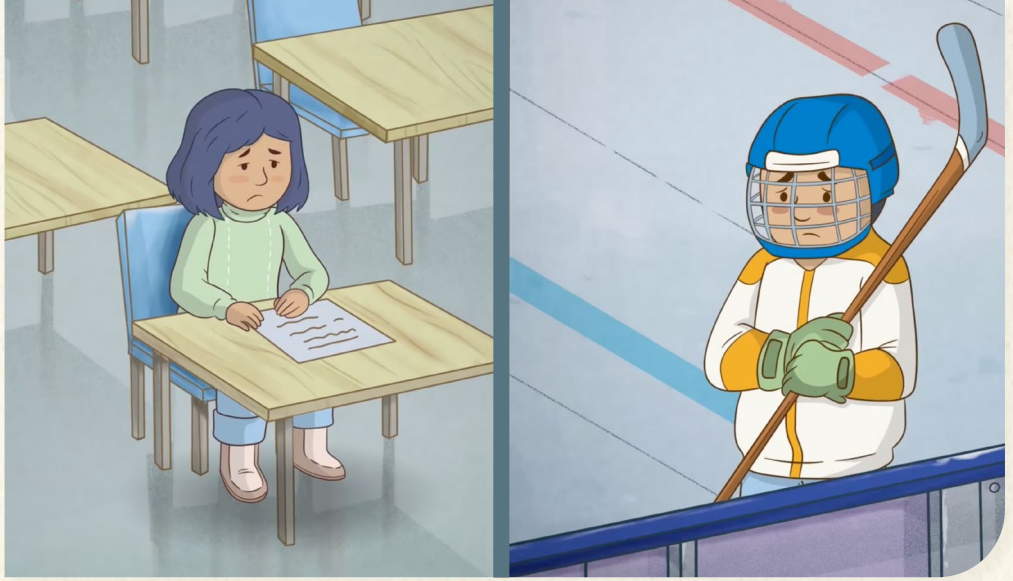
Children are particularly vulnerable to grooming because they are still developing a sense of self and an understanding of healthy relationships and boundaries. Children often look to adults and older children as authority figures they can trust. A predator may spend time becoming friends with a child to make them feel important or grown up. They may give the child extra attention and do fun things with them, such as taking them hunting alone or giving them gifts or treats. Though the child might eventually give in to the groomer's efforts, this does not qualify as consent.

Predators can also groom parents, caregivers, and educators to make them think a child is safe with them. This can be difficult to see because it can look like a healthy relationship. It is important to pay close attention when an adult or older child goes out of their way to be alone with another child. This can be an indication that the child is being groomed.

The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

CSA can have a lasting impact on a person. Survivors of CSA need suitable resources and supports. They can suffer from mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and substance dependency. They are also at risk of dropping out of school and being re-victimized. Appropriate supports are vital for a CSA survivor, as trauma can sometimes affect a survivor's relationships, behaviour, and well-being later in life.

It's important to understand that these effects are not inevitable. There are ways to prevent CSA and to recover from it. Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships and trust with children is an important factor in the prevention of and recovery from CSA.



Recognizing Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

Signs of CSA can be subtle, but we can learn to identify them with awareness and education. The abuser is often someone close to the victim or the victim's family. This can make it difficult for the people close to the abuser or the victim to accept the concept of CSA. Therefore, victims/survivors can feel discouraged from disclosing their abuse.

Sexual predators and abusers can be anyone and are often the people we don't expect. They can be family members, friends, or others in a position of trust, like teachers, coaches, or clergy. In Canada, 81 percent of CSA victims are abused by someone they or their family knows.[1]

Children may not disclose abuse directly or all at once. Children can be too young to understand what has happened to them. Fear is also a barrier for victims. Many victims do not speak up because they are afraid of their abusers. Victims may fear their family, friends, or community will not believe or support them. This is more likely if the abuser is in a position of power or a family member.

[1] Institut national de santé publique du Québec, "Prevalence of sexual violence experienced during childhood and adolescence," https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-violence/perpetration/adults.

Although a child might struggle to disclose their abuse, a parent, a caregiver, or an educator may notice changes in their health and behaviour that could indicate something has happened to them. Here are some examples of changes you might notice in a child that could be linked to CSA:

- Anxiety or excessive worry
- Depression, suicidal thoughts, or feelings of hopelessness
- Irritability
- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Inability to focus
- Poor performance in school
- Anger, aggression, and lashing out
- Risk-taking behaviour
- Freezing responses or not showing any emotion
- Withdrawing from activities and friends
- Clingy behaviour
- Disrupted sleeping patterns
- Refusing to spend time with a specific person
- Running away
- Sexual knowledge or behaviours that are not age appropriate
- Alcohol or drug use
- Bruising or marks on skin
- Urinary tract infections and bed wetting
- Sexually transmitted infections

These changes do not necessarily mean a child in your care is being abused. They can be indicators of many other major or minor traumas, like grief, neglect, bullying, or minor health issues such as urinary tract infections, stomach aches, or headaches. However, it is important to notice these changes so that you can take the appropriate next steps. The next section explores how to proceed if you suspect CSA.

Being an Active Bystander

An active bystander is a person who suspects a harmful situation has occurred or will occur and intervenes to stop concerning behaviour. This can be scary and uncomfortable, and it is important to protect the child.

If a bystander suspects CSA, by choosing to intervene, they do not need to make an outright accusation. They can point out that a child is uncomfortable or that a situation is inappropriate and are intervening to make it stop.

Despite your best intentions, the intervention might embarrass an innocent person, and they may work to demonstrate they are not a threat. However, if they are not innocent, and the behaviour continues or becomes more concerning, take further steps to protect the child and seek guidance or support.

Trust your instincts. Just as Inuit wayfinding teaches us to trust our instincts on the land, we must trust our instincts as parents, caregivers, and educators. It's okay to act if something does not feel right.

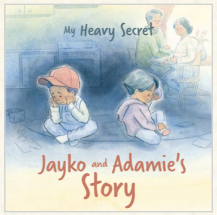
It's important to recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. See the following example scenarios:

Scenario	Appropriate	Inappropriate
An adult sees a young girl fall on the ice while playing and puts their hand on her shoulder to console her because she's hurt.	✓	
An adult sees a young girl fall on the ice while playing and rubs her back to console her. The adult continues to rub her back after they have been asked to stop and the girl has tried to move away.		X

To determine whether a behaviour is inappropriate, ask yourself:

- Does this interaction seem out of place?
- Is the child being singled out or favoured?
- Is the child uncomfortable?
- Does this person repeatedly behave this way?
- Has anyone else noticed or commented on the potential abuser's behaviour?

Need support with engaging children in conversations about sexual abuse? Try reading *My Heavy Secret: Jayko and Adamie's Story* or *My Heavy Secret: Lisi's Story,* which are books designed to help talk to children about CSA. Find out more about these books on page 34.









Responding to the Suspicion or a Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse

Children will rarely disclose an instance of abuse, but their behavioural changes can be indicators. A good practice with children in your care is to create an environment where they feel safe talking about what has happened to them. If you notice their behaviour has changed, they will feel safe communicating with you.

Disclosure can be more of a process than an event. Building a child's feelings of trust and safety is an important first step so they can overcome the fear and discomfort of talking about their CSA. Avoid asking repeated or leading questions. Listen to what the child chooses to share and allow trained professionals to gather further information.

Here are some things a young person might say when disclosing CSA and ways you can respond:

- "_____ is bothering me."
  "How is _____ bothering you?"
- "What do you think of _____?"
  "I don't know...what do you think of _____?"
- "_____ is mean."
  "What is _____ doing or saying to be mean?"

- "_____ does not pay attention to me anymore."
  "Why do you think _____ isn't paying attention to you?"
- "I don't want to go to _____ house anymore."
  "You don't have to go. Why don't you want to go to _____'s house?"
- "I don't like _____ anymore."
  "Why don't you like _____ anymore?"
- "Please don't go! Please don't leave me with _____."
  "Why don't you want to be left with _____?
- "I don't like it when you're gone."
  "What don't you like about me being gone?"
- "I feel uncomfortable when you aren't here."
  "What makes you feel uncomfortable when I'm not here?"
- "I'm not comfortable with _____"
  "What makes you uncomfortable around _____?"
- "I'm bad."
  "I don't think you're bad! I think you're [child's positive traits]. Why do you think you're bad?"
- "_____ did things to me."
  "What did_____do?"
- "_____ does bad stuff to me that I don't like."
  "What bad stuff does _____ do?"
- "_____ plays games with me that I don't like."
  "What games do they play that you don't like?"

How to Create a Safe Environment

Here are some ways to create a safe environment for important but difficult conversations with the child in your care about CSA:

- **Choose the right time and place.** Find a quiet, comfortable space where you are less likely to be interrupted. Make sure the child feels relaxed. Consider initiating a conversation during a calm moment in their day.
- **Use age-appropriate language.** Tailor your language to match the child's age and understanding. Pace yourself and use simple and clear terms to explain concepts without overwhelming them.
- **Start with open-ended questions.** Ask questions like this one: "How did that person's actions make you feel?" These types of questions encourage a child to express their thoughts and feelings.
- **Normalize feelings.** Reinforce that it's okay and expected to have a wide range of emotions if something has been done to them. Share your own feelings to model vulnerability, openness, and connection. This is not an invitation to share your personal experiences with CSA. Here, it is important to validate the child and the difficult emotions that they are experiencing.
- **Listen actively.** Give the child your full attention and listen without interrupting. Acknowledge and validate their feelings. Let them know it's okay to discuss difficult topics.
- **Encourage questions.** Invite the child to ask any questions they may have and answer them honestly and gently. If you are unsure of an answer, it's perfectly fine to be honest with them. You can use the opportunity to explore the question together.
- **Teach boundaries and safety.** Discuss the importance of personal boundaries and help the child recognize unsafe situations. Use relatable examples to help them understand safe and unsafe touches. Emphasize that it is okay to say "no" when someone crosses their boundary.
- **Provide reassurance.** Assure the child that they are safe and that they can talk to you about anything, no matter how difficult it may feel. Reinforce that they will be believed and supported.

- **Discuss healing and support.** Talk about the importance of healing and seeking help when needed. Describe the various ways in which a person can heal and provide examples of activities that foster emotional healing. Emphasize that discussing feelings can be a step toward healing.
- **Follow up.** Keep the conversation open by checking in regularly and revisiting the topic. Let the child know it's always okay to bring it up again whenever they feel ready.

> Starting the conversation can be hard! Refer to the Resources section for a curated list of educational resources that can help you introduce the topics of healthy relationships, sexual abuse, boundaries, and consent to children.





If you suspect abuse has happened or the child discloses abuse, it is important to respond carefully and with kindness. After a disclosure of CSA, a child will need the support of an adult more than usual.

How to respond after a child's disclosure:

- Show compassion and kindness to the child. Be gentle and deliberate. Showing fear or anger may cause them harm. Be calm and stay focused on the child.
- Tell the child you believe them and thank them for being brave enough to tell you.
- Let them know you are required to report the incident. This is the law.
- Avoid asking the child for detailed information or pressing them to repeat what happened.

How to support a child after a disclosure:

- Spend time with the child so they can talk about their feelings.
- Offer appropriate physical affection, such as hugs and kisses, but do not force it if the child's verbal or body language suggests it is unwelcomed.
- Try to follow or continue the child's normal routine (school, extracurricular activities, and so on). Routines help create a sense of safety, security, and connection.
- Be honest with your own feelings and share how you feel with the child.
- Adapt your language to the child's age and development level.
- Acknowledge the child's feelings and tell them that it is normal to go through different feelings. This will help them feel validated and comforted.

If the child in your care discloses an act of abuse, you must report it. It is the law. The following section will guide you through those steps and how to care for the child during the process.

> Need more support in broaching the topic? Try watching *What to Do If You Feel Unsafe*, which uses images from the two *My Heavy Secret* books to teach children about sexual abuse and talking to a safe adult. Find out more about this video in the Resources section.



Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

It is the law to report a suspected case of CSA. If a child has disclosed an act of abuse or you suspect abuse has occurred, you must report it to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

As discussed, an abuser is often a family member, a friend, or another person in a position of trust. This can make reporting them to the police difficult. The act of reporting can have immediate social consequences. It can end relationships, break trust, cause feelings of blame, and damage reputations. Even when reporting feels difficult, protecting the child's safety must come first.

You do not need proof of CSA to report it. The RCMP will start their own investigation, and it is your responsibility to cooperate with them. It is not recommended to investigate a suspected case of abuse on your own.

The Reporting Process

The reporting process can be intimidating for children and the adults supporting them. Despite the best intentions of those who will help with the investigation, the process can be triggering. A trigger is a sensory or situational cue, like a sound, smell, memory, or location, that prompts an automatic emotional, physical, or behavioural reaction. For example, a medical exam could remind a child of being touched by their abuser, which could make them fearful or upset. To help the child feel more comfortable and in control of the situation, you can let them know the steps of the investigation and why they are necessary. The typical steps of an investigation include:



1 A Medical Exam

Depending on the type of abuse a child has experienced and when it occurred, they may need an examination from a doctor or nurse. A healthcare professional will assess the child's health, check for injuries or infections, and, when appropriate, collect information or evidence that may support the investigation. This exam can feel stressful, uncomfortable, and invasive; however, it is an important step for the investigation process and the child's well-being.



2 An Interview with the Police and/or a Social Worker

The child may be interviewed by the RCMP and/or another trained professional as part of the investigation. The interview will be recorded and stored as evidence for the case. The interviewer may ask questions that make the child feel uncomfortable. The child might find talking about their experiences of abuse difficult, especially with a stranger. The interviewer will do their best to make the child feel as safe as possible. They may also invite a social worker to help support the child.





3 Police Investigation

Unfortunately, criminal investigations can take a long time and include multiple rounds of interviews. The delays can feel frustrating and like the investigation of CSA is not being taken seriously. The process is long, but you can phone the RCMP and ask for updates.

4 Court Decision

When the investigation is complete, the RCMP will hand over all findings to a judge. They may follow up with more questions. After the judge has reviewed all information for the case, they will decide the next legal steps for the victims and suspected abusers. The judge's decisions may bring up all kinds of emotions for the child and their support system.

> Need support explaining the reporting process? Try watching *What Happens After You Tell a Safe Grown Up*, which is designed to help children understand the steps of reporting and what is expected of them. Find out more about this video in the Resources section.



Recovery From Child Sexual Abuse

Recovery from CSA can be a long and difficult process and can cause a person to feel overwhelmed. However, it's important for survivors to learn to process their trauma and rebuild a sense of safety, confidence, and trust that may have been affected by their experiences.

It is important that children are supported during their recovery. With limited support, survivors of CSA can experience health struggles like depression, post traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, and substance dependency, and these struggles can be lifelong. With strong and diverse support, many survivors go on to build healthy, meaningful relationships and live meaningful lives. It's important to understand that these struggles can be managed and overcome with consistent supports that create hope and healing.

Recovery looks different for each survivor, and there is no normal timeframe for healing. Healing is not linear, and some days may feel harder than others. Survivors should take the time they need to heal. Even if it has been years since the abuse took place, it is never too late to begin the process of healing.

Healing from CSA can include the following self-care categories:

- Processing trauma
- Developing strategies for working through unwelcomed thoughts and memories
- Developing healthy coping mechanisms
- Managing feelings of isolation
- Rebuilding trust in relationships

Generational Trauma

Recovery can be personally healing and help reduce the impact of generational trauma that affects many communities in Nunavut and beyond. "Intergenerational trauma" means the mental and behavioural effects of trauma that are passed down between generations. Trauma can affect relationships and parenting across generations when people do not have opportunities for support and healing. However, cycles of harm can be interrupted, and survivors can build healthy relationships and create safe environments for future generations. Supporting the recovery of CSA survivors is an investment in the health of future generations.



Supporting Children Through Recovery

There are resources available in Nunavut to support survivors of abuse and those closest to them. There are helplines for those in immediate distress and ongoing counselling for later stages of recovery. See the Resources section at the end of this guide for a complete list of contacts and supports for all the stages of a healing journey.

A child's counselling is confidential, which can make parents and caregivers feel helpless. However, there are other ways safe adults in a child's life can help them through the recovery process. In order to create a safe and supportive environment for children, use the recommendations below as a guide.

- Spend time interacting and engaging with the child. Give them your undivided attention.
- Offer appropriate physical affection.
- Continue the child's normal routine when possible.
- Share honest feelings with the child.
- Adapt your language to the child's age and development level.
- Validate the child's feelings.
- Repeat what the child says back to them.

Supporting Caregivers and Supporters

A survivor's family and support team can benefit from helplines and counselling services as well. As previously mentioned, a child's abuser is usually someone known to and trusted by the family and community. Support services can help a child's support team come to terms with their own feelings of shame, guilt, frustration, or betrayal that might surface after a child's disclosure of abuse. These support services might also help you find other ways you can best support the child in your care. See the Resources section at the end of this guide for a complete list of contacts and supports for parents, caregivers, and educators.

Healing Through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Inuit have always understood wellness as an integration of mind, body, and community. You can use the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles to guide your healing and that of the child in your care. Some examples are below:

Aajiiqatigiinniq

Decision-making through discussion and consensus

Try group or family counselling. It can help to hear other people's experiences and perspectives.

Avatittinnik kamatsiarniq

Respect and care for the land, animals, and our environment

Find peace and healing by connecting with the land. Take walks, breathe in fresh air, and notice seasonal changes in your environment.

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq

Respecting others, relationships, and caring for people

Lean into healthy relationships. Spend time with family and friends, participate in community events, and talk to Elders and neighbours.

Pijitsirniq

Serving and providing for family and/or community

Spend time helping others. Volunteer at a community event, help an elderly neighbour with housework, or cook a meal for a sick friend. When we do good, we feel good!

Pilimmaksarniq

Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort

Learn the coping skills of someone in your life you admire. Ask them for advice or practise them together.

Piliriqatigiinniq

Working together for a common cause

Gather your support team. Find a circle of safe friends, family, and community members and have honest discussions about the support you and your child need.

Qanuqtuurniq

Being innovative and resourceful

Healing is not one-size-fits-all! Don't be afraid to try different strategies, like journalling, meditation, counselling, or reading books about health and healing.

Tunnganarniq

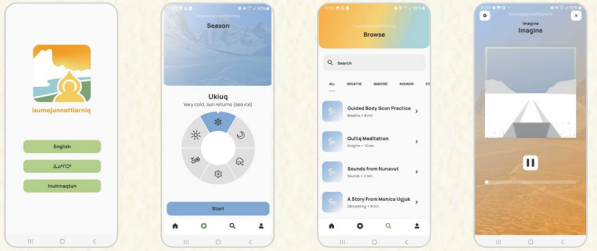
Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming, and inclusive

Open yourself to new people and ideas. Trauma can make us want to isolate ourselves, but new friends and opportunities can give us a new sense of excitement and purpose.

The Isumajunnattiarniq app can support you or a child in your care during recovery.

It is a culturally relevant, accessible digital tool designed to help manage stress and trauma-related symptoms through features such as guided mindfulness practices, therapeutic breathing exercises, and stories from Elders that promote intergenerational wisdom. This app can be helpful for people who live in remote communities with limited access to mental health-care services.

App Store
(for iPhone)



Google Play
(for Android)

Find out more about this app on page 36.



Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

This section discusses how to communicate openly with the child in your care, and it introduces important safety topics to discuss together.

Talking About It

Talking to children about sexual abuse and boundaries is challenging and essential. Positive and healthy relationships can help children feel safe, supported, and more comfortable talking about concerns. Spending time with the children in your care, listening to them, encouraging them, and having ongoing, age-appropriate conversations can help keep them safe.

The tips from the "How to Create a Safe Environment" section apply here:

- Choose the right time and place.
- Use age-appropriate language.
- Start with open-ended questions.
- Normalize feelings.
- Listen actively.
- Encourage questions.
- Teach boundaries and safety.
- Provide reassurance.
- Discuss healing and support.
- Follow up.

It is critical to introduce and explore the following topics with children in your care.

Body Parts

Teach children the proper names of their body parts. Help them understand the concept of private parts so they can recognize unsafe situations and use the right language to explain if something has happened to them.

Help children understand that their body belongs to them, just as every other person's body belongs to that person. Make it clear that no one should touch their private parts.

Feelings

Teach children the names of feelings and tell them about your own feelings. Help children name their own feelings and ask them how specific situations make them feel.

Build a routine around talking about feelings. Make sure children understand that all feelings are acceptable. A child who thinks it's wrong to feel mad or scared might not want to tell you if something bad happens to them.

Personal Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the limits you create between yourself and other people. They allow you to choose what is acceptable and healthy for you in your relationships. Healthy boundaries help protect emotional and physical well-being.

Since personal boundaries aren't usually physical, children may need support to understand them. You can use the following scenarios to help explain boundaries to them:

- Imagine you have a bubble around you. It is your own personal space where you feel comfortable. Now pretend someone you don't know is leaning in really close to you. As they get closer, you begin to feel uncomfortable. They have stepped into your bubble, which means they have crossed your personal boundary.
- Imagine that there is someone trying to hug you, and you don't want to be hugged. You tell them you don't want a hug but they hug you anyway. How would that make you feel?

Secrets

Teach children about different types of secrets. Some secrets are okay to keep, like a wrapped birthday present or a surprise party. Others can harm children, especially in the context of abuse. Teach children that they should never be asked to keep secrets about their body, safety, or something that makes them uncomfortable. Let them know they can always tell a safe grown-up.

Safe and Unsafe Touches

Help children understand the difference between safe and unsafe touch.

Teach children they have the right to say "no" to any touch that makes them uncomfortable, no matter who is trying to touch them. Sometimes that means saying "no" to hugging a family member or friend. Communicate that it is okay to say "no" to hugging, as it is the child's choice.

Help them understand the few occasions when it is safe for someone to look at or touch their private parts, such as a doctor's examination with your knowledge and approval or when a safe adult helps a child younger than five years old wash, dress, or use the washroom.



Safe Grown-ups

The concept of safe grown-ups can be difficult to communicate, as the people a child should be able to trust most can sometimes be the ones who cause them harm. As discussed, most victims of CSA have been abused by someone close to them, like a family member or another trusted person in their lives.

A safe grown-up is someone who ensures the safety and best interests of a child. Here are some characteristics of a safe grown-up that you can share with a child in your care:

- Shows physical affection to children only when appropriate and/or initiated by the child.
- Treats all children equally and does not give special or unwanted attention to a particular child.
- Respects appropriate boundaries with children and avoids unnecessary secrecy or situations that could make a child or caregiver uncomfortable. When private time with a child is necessary, they maintain transparency with the child's parent or caregiver whenever appropriate.
- Respects children's rights to privacy, especially relating to their bodies.
- Uses appropriate and transparent communication when interacting with children online.
- Avoids inappropriate conversations and keeps discussions child-friendly when children are around.

Keep the Dialogue Going!

Though we may like to keep children innocent, talking to them early about sex, body parts, boundaries, and forms of abuse, can give them the tools to recognize unsafe situations and protect them from predators. Make sure to tailor your language so that it is appropriate for their age. The conversation shouldn't stop there. You can repeat and adapt it as they grow.

As your children get older, you can talk about the news with them. For example, when there are stories about sexual assault, it can be a good time to talk about consent, power dynamics, responsibilities, and the law.

Staying Safe Online

The Internet and social media are big parts of our lives and our children's lives. TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Whatsapp, and online gaming all come with risks of dangerous interactions between children and people they do and do not know. These risks can include scams, identity theft, cyberbullying, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation.

The Internet allows many opportunities for predators to disguise their identities and prey on vulnerable people. These predators can come from within your physical community or outside of it.

The following scenarios are common ways that online predators can prey on children:

- **Grooming over text message or private messages on social media apps**
  Predators understand that children are most vulnerable when they are unsupervised. Text messages and private messages are a way for a predator to speak with children one-on-one. Private messages may begin innocently as a predator attempts to gain a child's trust. The predator may disguise their identity to make themselves seem like less of a threat to the child. As the online relationship continues, the predator may try to discuss sexual topics with the child or try to meet them in person. These are criminal offences.
- **Sharing or soliciting sexually explicit content**
  A predator may share sexually explicit photos or videos of others with children. They may also try to convince children to send photos or videos of themselves. These are all criminal acts. In Canada, it is illegal to watch, keep, send, post, and take pictures and videos of a minor. This includes photos or videos the minor may have of themselves.
- **Sharing intimate images without consent**
  A predator may post or share a sexually explicit photo or video of someone without their consent. This is illegal when the victim is a non-consenting adult, but even more so when the victim is a minor. Explain to your children that if they receive a non-consensual sexually explicit photo or video, they should tell you. Then you can report it to the RCMP.

A lot of the information in this section may seem intimidating or scary to parents, caregivers, and educators, especially if they do not use social media much. The following tips can help keep children in you care safe online:

- Learn about the apps, websites, and games children use, why they like them, and what they do on them. The more you know about your child's online life, the better you will be at protecting them. Understanding children's online habits can help you support their healthy development and safety.
- Teach children about the risks of being online. Encourage them to tell you if they encounter anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable, even if it's embarrassing.
- Use privacy and child content settings, and set expectations with your child. Many apps have privacy and child content settings you can turn on to limit the content a child can see and who they can interact with. Set expectations with your child about keeping their accounts visible only to safe adults and friends they know in real life. Tell them to inform you if someone they don't know tries to befriend them online.
- Keep the line of communication open and non-judgmental. Make sure your child knows they can talk to you about anything, even if it's about them doing something you told them not to do. Have regular conversations about safety, and do not blame or react negatively to a child who discloses they have been engaging in unsafe online behaviour. It may make them decide not to come to you if something happens to them in the future.

Continue these steps as children age. Keep learning about new technologies and apps, and keep talking to children about online safety.





Conclusion

CSA affects many people in our communities. Recovery from and prevention of CSA is a community effort. Though CSA is a difficult topic, it is one we need to talk about. Reading this guide is your first step toward supporting the children in your care and protecting them from sexual abuse.

Through strong relationships, open conversations, and community care, we can help children grow up safe, supported and connected.

We hope this guide has helped you feel confident in your ability to support the children in your care. If you need support, please see the "Resources" section on the next pages.



Resources

The following lists of resources are organized by purpose, including supports for people currently experiencing abuse, educational resources, and resources for recovery.

Supports for Survivors

Contact any of these support services if you or someone you know is experiencing abuse.

- A mental health nurse and/or social services worker in your community
- Your local Ilinniarvimmi Inuusilirijiit (school community counsellors)
- Wellness centres:
  - Kitikmeot—Department of Healthy Living: (867) 983-4670
  - Kivalliq—Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre: (867) 645-2600
  - Qikiqtani—Ilisaqsivik: (867) 924-6565
  - Iqaluit—Tukisigiarvik: (867) 979-2400
- Kamatsiaqtut Helpline: (867) 979-3333 or 1-800-265-3333 (toll free)
- Healing by Talking: Call 1-888-648-0070 or email healing@gov.nu.ca

- Kids Help Phone: Call 1-800-668-6868, text CONNECT to 686868, or use the online chat at www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Crisis Services Canada: Call or text 1-833-456-4566 or use the online chat at www.crisisservicescanada.ca
- Representative for Children and Youth Office: Call 1-855-449-8118, visit rcynu.ca, or email contact@rcynu.ca

Educational Resources

Use these resources to learn and teach children about topics of sexuality, consent, safety, healthy relationships, and more.

- ***My Heavy Secret: Jayko and Adamie's Story***
  This picture book for children ages 10 and under tells the story of two brothers who experience sexual abuse. A support section at the end of the book guides parents, caregivers, and educators through conversations they can have with children after reading the book.
- ***My Heavy Secret: Lisi's Story***
  This picture book for children ages 10 and under tells the story of a young girl who experiences sexual abuse. A support section at the end of the book guides parents, caregivers, and educators through conversations they can have with children after reading the book.
- ***My Heavy Secret: What to Do If You Feel Unsafe***
  This video uses images from the two *My Heavy Secret* books to teach children about sexual abuse and talking to a safe grown-up.



- ***My Heavy Secret: What Happens After You Tell a Safe Grown Up***
  This video uses images from the two *My Heavy Secret* books to teach children about what happens after they report their abuse to a safe adult, including the medical examination, the police investigation, and the judge's review of the case.
- **I Respect Myself**
  Created by Nunavut's Department of Health, www.irespectmyself.ca is a website with lesson plans, classroom presentations, and information for educators on how to teach about healthy relationships, consent, and sexuality.
- **Be Safe!**
  This Canadian Red Cross personal safety program is designed for children aged five to nine. It includes a collection of educational resources that promote children's personal safety and prevent sexual abuse. The Be Safe! kit is available in all Nunavut elementary schools.
- **The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P)**
  C3P offers programs, services, and resources for Canadian families, educators, child-serving organizations, law enforcement, and other parties. It aims to reduce the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, locate missing children, and prevent child victimization.
  Visit protectchildren.ca for more information.

Resources for Online Safety

Use these resources to learn and teach children about online safety.

- **I'm Happy Because I'm Safe, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada**
  This YouTube series, by Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, features short videos in English and different Inuit dialects about online safety for parents and caregivers and young people in different age groups.
  You can visit the website here:
  youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDfdlBuY3qeklH_0ZFFi0cShszj5DxUj5
- ***Online Safety for Kids***
  This series of booklets, developed by Isaksimagit Inuusirmi Katujjiqatigiit Embrace Life Council, offers thorough advice on how to keep children up to age 17 safe online.
  You can visit the website here: https://inuusiq.com/resource/youth-online-safety-booklets/

Supports for Recovery

This section of supports is for survivors and their loved ones who are not actively in a crisis but are seeking recovery from CSA.

- **Isumajunnattiarniq**
  The Isumajunnattiarniq app is a culturally relevant, inclusive, and accessible digital tool designed to support the mental health and well-being of Nunavummiut. Named after the Inuktitut word for mindfulness, Isumajunnattiarniq aims to provide a safe and supportive resource for users of all ages to help manage stress and trauma-related symptoms. Recognizing the ongoing challenges faced by remote communities in accessing physical and mental healthcare services, the app offers a modern, Nunavut-specific solution that combines traditional wisdom with innovative digital technology.
- **Umingmak Centre**
  The Umingmak Centre is a Nunavut-specific Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, created to support children, youth, and families impacted by abuse. Guided by Inuit values and community care, Umingmak Centre brings people and services together to form a circle of care—just like adult *umingmak* who surround and protect their young.

  You can visit the website here: https://umingmakcentre.ca/
- **Little Warriors**
  An organization that offers different treatment programs for survivors of CSA and their parents and caregivers, and workshops for parents, caregivers, and educators.

  You can visit the website here: http://littlewarriors.ca/
- **The Gatehouse**
  An organization that offers different treatment programs for adult survivors of CSA and their partners or support people.

  You can visit the website here: https://thegatehouse.org/



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This text adheres to the *Inuktut Spelling Standards*, First Edition and terminology developed and approved by Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit. For more information, visit https://www.taiguusiliuqtiit.ca/.

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