

## **Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County Signs of Sexual Abuse**

### **Behavioral Signs of Sexual Abuse**

- A child behaving in an unusually seductive manner with peers or adults.
- A child who is fearful of interpersonal relationships or overly compliant.
- Extreme modesty / an unwillingness to undress or participate in gym classes.
- Withdrawn, infantile behavior, regression of developmental milestones, ie., consistent thumb sucking, bed wetting, etc...
- Overly sophisticated knowledge and interest in sexual acts and vocabulary.
- Expressions by the child that he/she has been sexually involved with an adult or older child. The child may make indirect hints that allude to problems.
- Expressions of other children that the child told them of the sexual experience.
- Unusual sexual behavior or themes expressed through the child's drawings, stories, poems, schoolwork, etc...
- Sudden changes in behavior or attitude with no apparent basis, ie., death of a relative, divorce of parents, change of schools, etc...
- Sleeping problems, bed-wetting, nightmares or night terrors.
- Constant or persistent hand manipulation of genitals.
- Sex play beyond age-appropriate guidelines.
- Attempts to run away from home, delinquency use of drugs/alcohol.
- Poor peer relationships or sudden disinterest in peers.
- Self-injurious behavior, suicidal gestures/attempts.
- Increased fear, phobias, needs more reassurance than usual.
- Fear of being with a particular person.
- Promiscuous dress or extreme layering of clothing.
- Child takes on adult responsibilities or roles.
- Sexually assaultive behavior directed toward younger/smaller child.
- Academic failure.

\* Caution, these signs do not mean that a child was sexually abused but can be symptoms of many problems. If you have concerns, please discuss them with a professional.

### **Emotional Signs of Sexual Abuse:**

- Sudden change in demeanor/attitude - depression, anxiety, irritability, withdrawal.
- Increased generalized fear, phobias, ie., fear of darkness, restrooms, etc...
- Sudden separation anxiety outside of developmental expectations.
- Chronic ailments limiting activities, etc...
- Expressions of suicidal thoughts or plans.
- Lack of spontaneity, creativity, overly responsible.

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### **Physical Signs of Sexual Abuse:**

- Complaints of pain and/or itching in the genital areas, vaginal or anal soreness, bleeding.
- Evidence of trauma in the genital areas.
- Unusual odors around the genital areas.
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Pregnancy in a young child.
- Physical complaints with no apparent somatic basis, ie., persistent sore throats, stomach aches, vomiting, etc...
- Difficulty urinating, urinary tract infections (particularly young children).
- Sudden loss or increase in appetite, eating disorders.
- Self injurious behavior indicated by scratching, hitting, biting, bruising, or use of alcohol/drugs, suicidal gestures/attempts.
- Venereal disease.