

Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre  
**Child Assault Prevention Program**



CAPP Mandate:

To move children from a position of victimization to empowerment through role play, problem solving and the identification of community resources.

To provide resources to children through the training and awareness education of teachers and parents

## **The Child Assault Prevention Program**

**This program is *more* than street proofing.**

**It is an empowerment program that gives children skills and strategies they can use in potentially abusive and dangerous situations.**

**The program uses a combination of age appropriate discussion and role-play. We discuss with children the concept of rights and what it means to have them, particularly in potentially dangerous situations. The three rights we focus on are the rights to be 'safe strong and free.' This means children have a right to be safe wherever they are and whomever they are with; they have a right to stand up for their rights which may mean saying "no" to an adult; and they have the right to make choices about what happens to them. In order for children to be able to respond in abusive/threatening situations they first need understanding that they have a basic human right to expect NOT to be abused.**

**The three role-plays we do address different types of situations children may be in. The first one is about bullying. The second is about strangers and the last one concerns a known offender. There is facilitated discussion around each one, and children will be able to participate in the role plays if they choose. This activity is how children learn and practice the skills we are teaching**

**At the end of the program we have private time available for any children who may have questions or want to talk to us alone.**

**CAPP is a community-based project. This means that we all have a responsibility in ensuring our children grow up *safe, strong and free*. Your school communities' involvement in this program is a positive step in that direction.**

**Thank you for your support,  
The Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA Inc.)**

## CHILD ASSAULT PREVENTION PROGRAM

An abuse prevention program for grades 1 through 6 that teaches children skills and strategies they can use in potentially dangerous situations. Delivered by the Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre since 1995 to approximately 3,000 children each year.

"Your program and personnel were what we were looking for.

One very important concern of mine was the reaction and involvement of our special education pupils. I couldn't be happier! You succeeded in getting 100% participation - something that's not been achieved before.

We support your approach completely. For us it provides a unique service which we feel is essential."

*Principal*

"Feedback from the students showed that they received not only a great deal of information but practical strategies dealing with personal safety and self worth.

Our staff had nothing but praise for the presentations and felt that this program answered concerns about personal safety that are sensitive ones for them to deal with in the classroom.

The presentations to parents/guardians and staff beforehand cleared up many concerns and strengthened their views as to the importance of the CAP training program for all children.

Since our students are only K-Grade 3 we all felt the presentations were excellent to prepare young children!

You have my full endorsement of CAP - a program in which all children would benefit greatly. Their personal safety comes first!"

*Principal*



C. A. P. P.

## EMPOWERMENT VS 'RULES'

We have many safety rules in our society designed to keep us safe and we pass these on to our children. We know this from listening to our children. They are well versed in these rules. There is nothing wrong with rules; however there must be something else as well. Rules are about controlling the victim.....e.g. the notion that if you just follow all the rules, you will be safe and we know that is not true. Rules can actually leave people feeling more fearful because they focus on what you have to remember to be safe and how to do it right. Often you have no back-up plan because you are counting on the rules to work. It can also increase your feeling that you must have done something wrong because you followed the rules but were assaulted anyway..... "I didn't take the shortcut home, but was still assaulted."

Did any of you break a rule when you were a kid? It is inevitable and so kids need a back-up plan (so do adults). If a child does break a rule and something does happen to them, they are often more worried about getting in trouble for that and so many may not say anything about the assault (story about the girl and her backpack).

In contemplating child abuse we have been forced to contemplate children's status in general. As a class of people they are highly vulnerable.

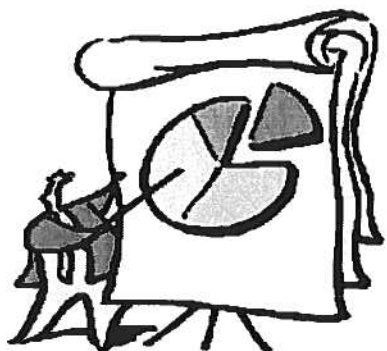
The problem with preparing for the worst is..... first you have to imagine it yourself. You have to be prepared to talk about it.....whatever the 'it' may be.

Lessening children's isolation lessens their vulnerability. CAP encourages children to think of each other for support when they need it.

Abuse prevention means preparing children for what might happen by giving them information. This does include providing rules but it also means talking about what else they could do if the rules are not enough. That is what empowerment means.

How do we know when something is wrong? Often we feel it or we trust our instincts about it. We must teach children to do the same. Trusting your instincts is the exact opposite of living in fear and in most cases is where self defense starts. In many cases if you don't trust your instincts it will be too late to do anything else.

**\*\*\*REMEMBER---YOU ARE THE EXPERT ON YOUR CHILD\*\*\***



# STATISTICS

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1-3 girls and 1-5 boys will be sexually assaulted by someone they know before they turn 18

When disclosing abuse children need to tell on average 8 times before finding someone who will listen and help them

Kidnapping by a stranger is rare. Out of nearly 70,000,000 children, fewer than 100 are kidnapped by strangers. (U.S. stat)

The average child molester victimized between 30-50 children before ever being arrested

8 out of 10 students say they have experienced some form of sexual harassment at school

90% of households have video games. Children play on average 2hrs per day

An extensive U.S. study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health found as strong a link between excessive television/video game consumption in formative years as there is between lung cancer and smoking

The average age boys begin watching pornography is 10 years old

Cyberbullying has replaced 'face-to-face' bullying for most students. The majority of bullying that occurs is on social media, making it more difficult for students to avoid it or dis-engage from it.

## DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS?

Teaching children this rule makes us feel better. This is probably one of the most difficult rules to enforce or monitor. We believe that if children follow this rule it will help keep them safe.

In this book, "Protecting the Gift", Gavin DeBecker says, since children see their parents violate this rule all the time... *Never talk to strangers, it turns out it isn't a rule at all, but a highly flexible and incomprehensible concept that only Mom and Dad really understand if even they do.*

Children WILL talk to strangers, despite this rule. Their idea of a 'bad' stranger is based more on that persons' appearance. The disservice this does children is that you cannot make that kind of decision based solely on looks and it does nothing to help children develop their own inherent skills of evaluating this behaviour.

\*\*\* If lost, your child's ability to talk to strangers is the single greatest asset he could have. Fear of people is really the fear that we cannot predict their behaviour. Communicating with strangers is part of the good will. Children who communicate with strangers are exercising their intuition. They learn what feels comfortable and what does not. That learning can be aided by a parent who watches a child communicate with a stranger and discusses it with them. *For example*, in a restaurant or other public places you can ask general questions about any encounters that have, i.e., "what do you think of that man/woman who started talking to you while we were in line?"

Children need to know that not all strangers are bad, and they need to know how to talk to them and who to choose if they need help. The issue isn't really strangers, it is more about *strangeness*... paying attention to behaviour and whether or not that behaviour, makes them feel ok or not. Talk to them about what they would do if they got separated from you in a public place; Who would they go to for help? Why they would choose that person? This gives you an opportunity to discuss their plan with them, arrange for a place to meet if they get lost.

For most types of violence, a predator needs to have control of his target and privacy to be able to do anything, which is why teaching children to *make a scene* is so important. Think about how many times in a public place *you* wander far enough away from your child, or are preoccupied with something else to allow enough time for the opportunity for a predator to approach your child. In these kinds of situations, time is of the essence, so children need to be prepared to yell, make a scene, draw attention to what is happening... immediately!

Children who are *always* afraid and children who are *never* afraid have something in common; neither one will get the benefit of fear and what that means when they need it most. Constant depiction of a dangerous world (mostly through exposure to media) leads children (and adults) to believe that they aren't competent to meet the challenges of life and that belief can permeate the entire experience of life.

## IF A CHILD IS SEXUALLY OR PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED

**BE CALM.** Breathing will help you stay calm. Your response to the assault will make a big impact on how the child feels about it. Getting very upset in front of the child will only make him/her feel worse about the assault. Share your feelings of concern honestly and calmly.

**BELIEVE THE CHILD.** Questioning their honesty will make them feel doubted and unsupported. It may cause them to stop talking. Too often children lack credibility. Listen to the child in a non-judgmental way. Do not push them to do more than they are ready to. Let the child tell their story in their own way at their own pace. You or someone else will have time to get the facts later. Assure the child that what happened was not their fault, that the offender has a problem and that he needs help. Let them know how brave they were to talk about it.

Tell the child directly and openly what you plan to do to deal with the situation. Also, ask them what they would like to do. Respect their wishes as much as possible. **It is important at this time that the child begins to regain some sense of control over the situation.**

## Sexual Child Abuse: Grooming

1-10 children in Canada were sexually victimized before they turned 18, most by someone they knew.

85-90% of the clients at our centre (men and women) were sexually assaulted as children by adults they knew and trusted.

**Grooming** is the beginning of the sexual assault process. Offenders build trust with the child and their family in an effort to gain access to and control the child. This is often an adult the child and family already knows, but could also be someone they meet and have frequent contact with, i.e. a coach or volunteer. They may also meet them online.

Offenders may use a variety of techniques to manipulate children into doing what they want. These may include:

- Falsely identifying themselves online as one of the child's peers
- Flattery/complimenting the child; supporting them/appearing interested in their life
- Promising a better life, ie no parents telling you what to do
- Promise of gifts, cell phones, money, etc
- Threats either to the child or members of their family
- Exchange of sexual pictures to make the victim more comfortable in sending sexual pictures or videos in return. These then can be used to blackmail the child into doing what the offender wants.

A 2019 joint investigation by CBC news and sports revealed that at least 222 coaches who were involved in amateur sports have been convicted of sexual offences in the past 20 years involving 600 victims under the age of 18.

Canadian Centre for child protection is detecting 10,824 new images of child sexual assault every 12 hours.



## *Is Your Child a Victim?*

### **Warning Signs Your Child may be a target of School Violence:**

1. Missing items and /or mysterious injuries: Don't automatically assume that these are the result of carelessness, especially if it is happening frequently or more than is usual for your child. \
2. Skipping school, making excuses to not go, or failing grades: Your child may be afraid to be at school.
3. Lack of friends or friends you do not know: Trouble socializing at school can leave children more vulnerable to being bullied
4. Talking back: Victims of violence often feel helpless and strike out at parents and teachers or siblings.
5. Loss of appetite, trouble sleeping or excessive secretiveness: Any of these may be a reaction to a bullying situation.

Talk to your child if you suspect he/she is the target of bullying. Let them know that it is not their fault and that you are there to help them. Help problem solve a solution with your Childs' input. This is empowering them and helping them feel that they are capable of handling the problem



## DIGITAL ABUSE

*"We didn't have a choice to know any life without ipads or iphones, I think we like our phones more than we like people." (13 year old girl)*

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Children born between 1995-2012 are the first generation to spend their adolescents with smartphones....what does this mean?

Dr. Michael Chang from the childrens' hospital in Ottawa reports that between 2010 and 2018 there was a 75% increase in visits to the hospital by youth for mental health issues, including suicide ideation, as well as suicide attempts.

The more time spent on phones, the more teens reported that they were stressed and unhappy. There is now a definitive link between online activity and depression.

More time spent on phones and devices means not enough sleep, which is a contributor to depression and stress. They cannot pick up on social cues as well because you cannot see facial expressions online.

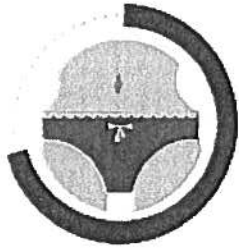
Time spent on smartphones exacerbates teens' fear of missing out

1-4 teens say they have been bullied online or on phones. This includes being called names, harassed or put down in dating relationships.

52% of teens who experience digital abuse also experience physical abuse in their relationships

Texting while driving has replaced alcohol as the number 1 cause of death

# Sexting. Is it safe?



**70%**  
of teens have admitted  
to sexting their girlfriend  
or boyfriend



**40%**  
of ALL teenagers are  
estimated to have sent  
suggestive images or  
messages



**22%**  
of teenage girls have  
sent sexts



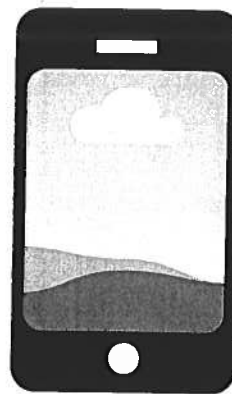
**18%**  
of teen males admit to  
sexting

## Why do teens sext?

- For teen girls:
  - 40% sext as a joke
  - 34% sext to feel sexy
- For teen boys:
  - 77% have sent nude photos to girls to initiate sex
- For both sexes:
  - 68% of both sexes have sent sexts because they feel pressure to do so
  - Girls are also asked to send texts 68% more often than boys, yet girls are often blamed for their sexting behaviour

"The photo-sharing app Snapchat offers a false sense of privacy by promising it will erase photos.

In fact, numerous third-party apps like SaveSnap, SnapBox and SnapSpy offer users the ability to save incoming photos. "



## DID YOU KNOW...

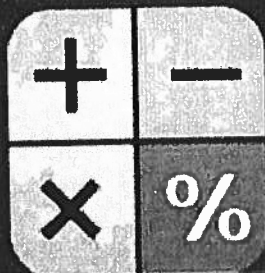


THAT **ANYONE** (EVEN TEENS) WHO SENDS A NUDE PHOTO CAN BE CHARGED AS A **SEXUAL PREDATOR?**

TeenSafe

"Many teens, and their parents, aren't aware that sexting, even when the images aren't shared beyond the sender and receiver, can be considered child porn under Canadian law. And it's in this confusing legal landscape that law enforcement and educators are finding new, sometimes conflicting, ways to teach teens about safe sexting."

# PARENTS NEED TO KNOW



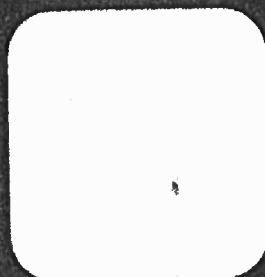
## Calculator%

This app looks like a calculator but functions like a secret photo vault.



## Omegle

A free online chat website that promotes chatting anonymously to strangers.



## Yellow

This app is designed to allow teens to flirt with each other in a Tinder-like atmosphere.



## Whisper

An anonymous app where the creators promote sharing secrets and meeting new people.



## Ask.fm

Ask an anonymous question and get an answer. This app has been linked to the most severe forms of cyberbullying.



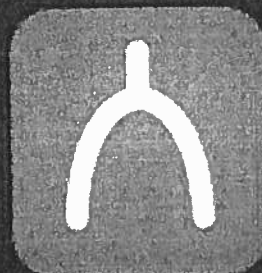
## Hot or Not

Strangers rate your profile. Goal is to lead to a hook up.



## Burn Book

Post anonymous rumors about people through audio messages, texts, and photos.



## Wishbone

An app that allows users to compare kids against each other and rate them on a scale.



## Kik

Messaging app. Kik has built in apps and web content that would be filtered on home computer.



## Instagram

Many kids are now creating fake accounts to hide content from parents. Kids also like to text using Instagram because messages are deleted once a user

# Niagara Sexual Assault Centre

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Email: [carsa@sexualassaultniagara.org](mailto:carsa@sexualassaultniagara.org)

We provide in office counselling to survivors of sexual assault as well as outreach counselling throughout the Niagara Region. 85% of our clientele are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This statistic underscores the need for this program in our schools.

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