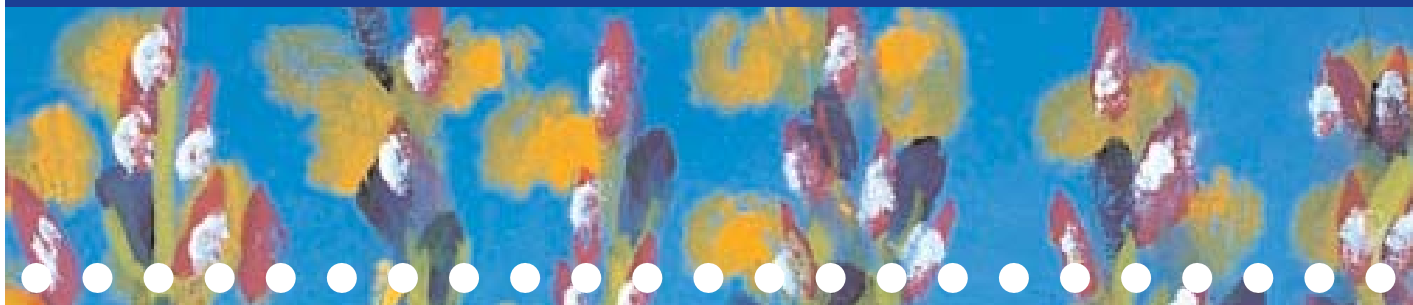


Children First: Safe and Secure



Section I—Child Abuse Prevention

Your Role Regarding Child Abuse and Neglect

Believer:

Wouldn't it be comforting to believe that child abuse couldn't happen here? But we know better--child abuse can happen in any setting and those who are involved in the abuse of children are those very people who are responsible for their care. We must believe that it does occur and be prepared to take action. While we shouldn't try to excuse the abuse, we can try to help. And if we find our own behaviors toward children inappropriate, try to change--and seek help if we can't.

Observer:

Be aware of the physical signs of child abuse and neglect, behavior changes, and changes in relationships with peers. Sometimes it is hard to determine what is different or out of place. Just remember, if it doesn't seem right, it usually isn't.

Listener:

Listen to what children are saying. They may speak directly to you or they may tell a friend there is something wrong in their lives. They may also speak through play, their writing, or through their reaction to the books they read.

Reporter:

On occasion, your observations of a child or parent may lead you to suspect child abuse. Don't assume that someone else will make a report. Don't second-guess, act! Remember that by reporting, you are taking steps in rebuilding a family and ending a child's suffering. The Texas Abuse Hotline is 1-800-252-5400 and is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Model:

Children need adult models who provide them with positive, nurturing reinforcement of their own worth. It is important for children to feel there are adults who consider them important. It is equally important for them to carry these positive nurturing images forward into their adult life.



Advocate:

The focus of Child Protective Service is to protect the child from abuse so its priority is to provide services to the parents so that they will stop the maltreatment. Often the child victim receives little or no help since the resources of the system are limited. Child abuse prevention is a community issue. Connect yourself with others and you will find colleagues and friends who share your concern. Seek opportunities to get involved. As an advocate you can make a difference in the child's life and demonstrate that there are adults who care.