Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit

April is Sexual Violence Awareness Month as well as Child Abuse Prevention Month. This is why we chose to focus on these subjects for these materials. The following toolkit has been created for any organization that wants to reach the Latino community in order to raise awareness about child abuse, but are not able to access resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate due to lack of bilingual staff or budget.

Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center offers this resource to be used in social media campaigns. Here you will find 30 posts containing information and statistics for each day of the month of April. We invite you to use the hashtags #latinosenvirginia and #StopChildAbuse

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Don't let a child suffer, together we can make a difference!

Prevention is possible.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between 2 minors when one of them leverages power over the other. This includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and erotic communication over the phone or the Internet.
Is it possible that I know someone who is sexually abusing a child?

Strangers are not necessarily the greatest risk to our children, but from people we know and trust.

90% of sexually abused children know their attacker.

60% of sexually abused children are assaulted by people their family trusts.

30% of sexually abused children are assaulted by family members.
40% of sexually abused children are assaulted by stronger children.

1 in 6 women age 13 and older is a victim of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.

How can I help minimize child sexual abuse?
Reduce or eliminate situations in which the child is alone with a potential aggressor.

How can I help minimize child sexual abuse?
Check the physical environment for hidden areas and correct any hazards.
How can I help minimize child sexual abuse?

Make sure the child's interactions with other people can be observed and interrupted.

How can I help minimize child sexual abuse?

Take precautions and avoid putting children at risk while they are hanging out with other children. Keep in mind that older youth should not be isolated or alone with a child.

How can I help minimize child sexual abuse?

Control the use of the Internet and be aware of the interactions that the child may have with other people, whether through online games, text messages, social networks, etc.

And how should I talk to my children about their body and boundaries?

Have open conversations with your children and use the correct names for body parts so they know how to express themselves. Abusers exploit lack of knowledge to keep them quiet, ashamed and submissive.

Talking about personal safety and sex creates a protective bond between parent and child.
How to teach a child that no one should touch their body?

1. Teach your child that their body belongs to themselves and no one is allowed to touch it, especially without their consent.
2. Tell your child the proper name of each part of the body.
3. Tell your child that they can refuse to be touched, even by a family member, if they feel uncomfortable.
4. Teach your child to firmly say NO when someone is trying to make them do something unwanted.
5. Talk to your child about the difference between good secrets and bad secrets.
6. Teach your child that no one should look at or touch their private parts, which are the ones covered by their underwear.

Overstepping boundaries includes:

- Touching private parts.
- Uncomfortable and excessive contact.
- Speaking in a sexual manner, or displaying sexual images.
- Asking to keep a secret or interacting privately.
- Asking or encouraging a youth to be alone with an adult.
- Gifts and privileges that are special, exclusive, excessive, or kept private.

Child sexual abuse is more common than we imagine. Studies indicate that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will experience some form of sexual abuse before age 18.

Because child sexual abuse is, by its very nature, secretive, many of these cases go unreported.

Children do not report sexual abuse immediately due to fear of negative reactions, or being harmed by their abuser.
Understand why children are afraid to talk about abuse:

- Sometimes the abuser threatens the child or a member of the family.
- The abuser might embarrass the child, tell them that he should let it happen, or tell them that their parents will get angry.
- The abuser may try to confuse the child about what is right and wrong.
- Some kids are too young to understand what is going on.

Know the red flags in children and adolescents:

- Physical signs are not common but can include bruising, bleeding, redness, rashes, or crusting around the mouth, genitals, or anus. It is also common for urinary tract infections, abnormal flow, sexually transmitted diseases to occur.
- Anxiety, chronic stomach pain, headaches.
- Emotional cues and behavioral changes such as isolation, fear, depression, unexplained anger, etc.

What other red flags should I be aware of?

- Other red flags may include nightmares, bedwetting, failing grades, animal abuse, bullying or being bullied, setting things on fire, running away from home, and self-harm of any kind.
- Age-inappropriate sexual behavior and language.
- Early use of alcohol or drugs can also be a sign.
What should I do if a child discloses that he or she is being sexually abused?

- Listen calmly and openly.
- Don’t fill in any possible gaps in the story with your words, and don’t rush to “get to the bottom of it all”.
- Allow silence in the conversation so that the child takes his time and can say everything he needs.
- Don’t ask leading questions about details.

What should I do if a child reveals that they are being sexually abused?

- Ask open questions like: What happened next? Or it's okay to tell me more. You can tell me what you want.
- Say “I believe you”.
- Say “What happened is not your fault”.
- Say “I am the adult and it is my responsibility to protect you.”

Disclosure of sexual abuse means that the child has chosen you as the person he or she trusts to tell you what is happening. The child is in a vulnerable situation. Give him care, compassion, and trust.

When you react to a child’s disclosure or confession with anger or mistrust, the child is likely to feel ashamed, guilty, shut down, or change or retract the story.

What should I do if I suspect a child is being sexually abused?

- Suspected sexual abuse means you have seen signs in a child or have witnessed the overstepping of boundaries by an adult or other youth. If there is suspicion of abuse, it is useful to set limits and ask questions about the situation that concerns you.
- It is not common to catch an aggressor in the act of abusing a child, but it is common to see him breaking rules and trying to exceed limits.
- We must to be able to learn to identify what is going on and ask questions.
It is important to remember that generally:

- Girls are more likely to disclose what happened to them than boys.
- School-aged children tend to tell a caregiver what happened.
- Teens are more likely to tell their friends.
- Very young children tend to reveal abuse accidentally because they do not have as much understanding of what has happened to them, or the words to explain it.

Between April 2021 and March 2022 Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center served 132 Hispanic children, providing advocacy services exclusively for cases of sexual violence.

No one has the right to harm or force anyone into unwanted sexual contact, regardless of the person's age, gender, race, sexual preference, disability, or immigration status.

Remember, sexual abuse is never the victim's fault. No one deserves to be raped or sexually abused, under any circumstances.

If you, or someone you know is experiencing or has experienced any kind of sexual abuse, and don't know what to do, call us! (888) 969-1825

Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center offers free and confidential services in Spanish. We are here to support you throughout your process.