Common Myths

**Children who have a “normal” medical exam were not sexually abused.**
**FALSE:** The majority of children who have been sexually abused do not have conclusive medical findings that substantiate sexual abuse.

**Children make this thing up for attention.**
**FALSE:** Most victims are very reluctant to disclose abuse, they attach a sense of shame to their victim status, and blame themselves for the abuse.

**Only female children are sexually abused.**
**FALSE:** Many boys are victims of sexual abuse.

**You will be able to tell if your child has been sexually abused.**
**FALSE:** There is no foolproof way to tell if your child has been abused.

**All children who have been sexually abused will become sexual abusers in the future.**
**FALSE:** Appropriate counseling may help prevent the cycle from continuing. Children who have been sexually abused need help healing with the trauma of abuse.

**Children will tell someone right away when they have been abused.**
**FALSE:** Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell someone about their abuse. Many children are threatened not to tell.

**Children are always angry with their abuser.**
**FALSE:** Children can have feelings of anger, fear, love, and concern for their abusers. Children can love the abuser but hate what the abuser did.

**A child who was sexually abused once will not let it happen again.**
**FALSE:** Children do NOT let abuse happen and often cannot protect themselves against adults.

**Sexual activities with a child which are “gentle” and not forced or do not involve penetration will not harm the child.**
**FALSE:** Any sexual activity with a child can be emotionally and physically harmful.

**Sexual assault by a stranger is more traumatic than sexual abuse by a known adult.**
**FALSE:** Children can be more traumatized when a known adult commits the abuse because the child’s trust in the adult has been broken.

**All sexual offenders are men.**
**FALSE:** Women and children can be sexual offenders, too.

**If an alleged offender insists he or she did not abuse the child, the child must be lying.**
**FALSE:** Many offenders deny they abuse children. The police and Child Protection Services will carefully investigate cases of alleged abuse.

**Men who sexually abuse children do not have relationships with women.**
**FALSE:** Men who sexually abuse can be married or in a serious relationship with an adult woman.

**You can tell if a person would molest a child by their personality or appearance.**
**FALSE:** There is NO foolproof way to tell if a person would abuse a child. People of all incomes, education levels, and professions have been convicted of child sexual abuse.