

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Victim Assistance services are available to help you and your child manage the emotional impact of the crime. The crime may also have an emotional impact on other family members. Family conflicts may surface due to the related stress. Sometimes family members resent the extra attention given to the victim. If your family is having trouble dealing with what has happened, please remember that the Victim Assistance Unit is here to help. Services can be provided to the child victim, family members, and other impacted support people.

Police questioning and court appearances can be frightening to anyone, but especially to a child. Victim Assistance advocates are available to explain the legal process, be present at police interviews and can attend court with you and your child.

Victim Assistance personnel can also provide referrals to short-term counseling to cope with the emotional impact of being a crime victim. Counseling services are available to both the victim and other family members who may be affected by what has happened. If you are having a difficult time handling your own feelings about this incident, it may help you to talk with a counselor. This is especially important if your feelings are interfering with family relationships or with your ability to help your child recover from this crime.



**Glendale Police Department
Victim Assistance Unit
(602) 930-3030**

**Glendale Family Advocacy Center (GFAC)
(623) 930-3720**

**Maricopa County Attorney's Office
Victim Services Division
(602) 506-8522**

**National Child Abuse Hotline
(800) 422-4453**

**Arizona Child Abuse Hotline
(888) SOS-CHILD
(888) 767-2445**

**Crisis Response Network
(24/7 crisis line)
(800) 631-1314
(602) 222-9444
TTY/TDD (800) 327-9254**

**Community Information & Referral
(800) 352-3792**

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July 2023

**WHEN YOUR
CHILD IS
A VICTIM**

**GLENDALE POLICE
DEPARTMENT**



As a parent, you may feel angry, worried, upset or afraid if you discover your child has been a victim of crime. You may not have realized something had happened and finding out your child has been affected by crime can be shocking and difficult to understand. Many parents feel powerless and are unsure how they can help their child.

Every child and young person is an individual and may be affected in their own way. Different crimes can affect your child in unique ways. It is important to remind your child that whatever they are feeling is okay, that things can and will get better, and that there are many people who can help. Just like young people, it is also important for parents to be able to share their own fears and concerns.

INITIAL REACTIONS ARE CRITICAL

The reaction of those around your child is the single most important factor in how he or she will cope with being the victim of a sex-related crime. Immediately after the incident, provide your child with plenty of reassurance, comfort, affection and consideration. After the initial crisis, you need to find a delicate balance. You should not dwell on the issues or give it unusual amounts of attention, but you also need to be open to your child's questions and expressions of feelings.

HIDE YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Watch your comments, both those made directly to your child and those that your child may overhear. You may be passing on your fears, biases or shame to your child. Comments that seem helpful on the surface, such as: *you must be angry* or *you must have been very upset* can set the child up for problems. Demands for revenge or threats about the offender can further confuse or frighten your child. Children do not want to see you get in trouble for something that happened to them. Also, be careful not to make your child feel that he/she is ruined for life because of the incident. Instead, assure your child that it was an unfortunate experience that they are able to overcome. Children are often so resilient that they can bounce back from bad experiences with little difficulty. Remember, your child may not be as upset as you are. In fact, it is not uncommon for many parents to be more upset about the incident that has happened than the child is.

CHILDREN AND GUILT

Guilt can be emotionally devastating to a child. Questions that start with the word *why* often add to feelings of guilt. Avoid statements such as: *why did you talk with him/her*; *why didn't you run away*; or *why didn't you tell me*.

Even if you believe that your child used bad judgment, this is not the time to give a lecture. Keep in mind that your child did not ask to be victimized. Do not punish your child or try to make him/her feel responsible for the incident. Also, in your attempt to make some sense of what happened, try not to blame yourself. The only person responsible for this incident is the offender.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE FEAR

Watch for creating a fear of the world or a fear/disgust of sex and bodily functions. Let the child know in simple terms that what happened was wrong and that the offender is a person who has made a bad choice with their words and actions.

Empower your child by giving them the right to say no. Help your child understand that they have a right to keep their body private, they have the right to refuse any kind of touch from another person, and they have the right to say no to anyone who wants to keep something a secret.

If your child exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior, use a good manners approach to remold their understanding about what is, and is not, appropriate. Do not make him/her feel bad about such behavior. The offender may have tricked your child into thinking inappropriate behaviors were okay.

RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S PRIVACY

Respect your child's privacy and feelings. Who you and your child tell about what happened is strictly up to you and your child. It is suggested that all adults who are told about the incident read this brochure so they respond in a supportive and caring way. Some people may say things that hurt simply because they do not know any better. Gossip and rumors add to everyone's stress. Consider telling supportive family or friends so they can help provide needed comfort, support and understanding to your child.

UNDERSTAND THE COURT PROCESS

Most parents do not have a realistic understanding of how the court process works. They fear that the court experience will be traumatic to their child. Victim advocates are available to help you and your child through the court process. Victims also have specific rights under Arizona law and the rules of criminal procedure which ensure that they will be treated with dignity and respect.

Court proceedings offer an opportunity for your child to see the connection between what was done to them and the consequences to the offender. Since many cases are resolved with plea agreements, successful prosecution may be possible without the need for you or your child to formally testify in court.

DEALING WITH THE FUTURE

Right now you may be going through a difficult time. It may help to remind yourself that the intensity of your feelings will diminish over time. Do not dwell on the incident. Let your child determine when it is discussed. Your goal as a caregiver should focus on re-establishing routines and predictability. Try to set aside your fears and avoid a tendency to become over-protective.

It may be time to seek professional counseling if you notice that your child seems unusually upset or shows signs of emotional distress such as sleeping difficulties, changes in appetite or school performance, withdrawal from social contacts, thoughts of suicide or self-harm, or substance use.

www.GlendaleAZ.com/GFAC