Child Sexual Abuse Prevention During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While early data shows that reports of abuse have dropped during the coronavirus pandemic, experts are concerned that abuse may actually be increasing. A focus on prevention—equipping families with the skills to start safety conversations and create comfortable environments where kids can ask questions, and even disclose abuse—is more important than ever.

What the Research Says

1 in 4 girls & 1 in 20 boys report experiencing sexual abuse by age 18.

Children who are informed about their bodies and who feel comfortable talking openly with a caring adult are less likely to be abused and more likely to disclose abuse if it happens.

In 90% of cases, sexually abused children know their abuser.

Many parents and caregivers are reluctant to educate their children about sexual abuse because they view it as an uncomfortable topic to discuss.

The Impact of the Pandemic

In 2020, official reports of child abuse fell by an average of 40 percent compared to 2019.

Data from various abuse prevention hotlines shows a striking increase in calls and record requests for services.

Educators are among the most frequent reporters of suspected child abuse. With many students still in remote settings, this adds urgency to prioritizing prevention.

Starting the Conversation

The Hot Chocolate Talk How-to Guides help parents and caregivers navigate and normalize these vital safety conversations.

Available to download at HotChocolateTalk.org, our free research-based guides contain practical advice and age-appropriate conversation starters to help parents and caregivers talk with kids about personal safety.

Connect with an Expert

Schedule an interview with child sexual abuse prevention expert Dr. Tia Kim, PhD. Dr. Kim is Committee for Children’s vice president of education, research, and impact.

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