

Description of Juvenile Assessment

The Children's Division has received a report of concern regarding your child(ren). The Division is required by section 210.148 RSMo., to respond to calls to the child abuse/neglect hotline in which a child under the age of 14 has been alleged to have committed an act of sexual abuse.

The Children's Division understands that sexual behaviors can be very difficult for parents and caregivers to talk about. The purpose of the assessment process is to discuss:

- The safety and well-being of your child(ren),
- Your family's strengths, abilities, and resources, and
- How the Division can help your family.

It is the goal of the Children's Division to provide your family education about child sexual behaviors and to assist in making plans to help keep your child(ren) safe. If the assessment indicates that your family could benefit from services, the Children's Service Worker will offer to work with you to develop a plan to meet your family's specific needs. This may be done by discussing the reported concerns, any specific concerns to your child(ren)'s safety, any specific resources you feel your family needs, and community resources that may be helpful to your family.

By working together, the Children's Division has the best opportunity to accurately understand your family and find ways to improve your family's well-being.

While the goal of the assessment process is to provide support and any necessary treatment, there may be situations in which a child's sexual behavior requires the intervention of the Juvenile Court. This may be due to the severity of the behavior, repeated behaviors, or the inability or unwillingness of the parent or caregiver to address the behavior.

The Children's Division will make every reasonable attempt to complete the assessment within 45 days. This may be extended if you and your Children's Service Worker need more time to work together.

Children's Services Worker

Telephone

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Children with Problem Sexual Behaviors



What are problem sexual behaviors?

All parents confront how to deal with their child's sexual development and curiosity. Some sexual play between young children close in age is normal. However, aggressive or intrusive sexual behaviors are concerning and potentially harmful. The sexual behaviors of children take place for many reasons, such as a child feeling anxious or angry, a reaction to a traumatic experience, curiosity after seeing sexual materials, seeking attention, or trying to imitate others. **With support and appropriate intervention, most children do not continue to have problem sexual behaviors.**

What are some concerning behaviors?

- Repeatedly showing or looking at private parts.
- Extreme or inappropriate masturbation.
- Not recognizing boundaries.
- Aggressive sexual acts.
- Use of force, threats, or bribes in sexual activities.
- Causing harm (physical or emotional) to another child,
- Sexual activity with children of a different age or developmental level.
- Not responding after being told to stop.
- Accompanied with strong, upset feelings such as anger or anxiety.

What can I do?

Seek professional support: Effective treatment actively involves the parents and caregivers. Typically treatment addresses impulse control, decision making, coping skills, boundaries and empathy.

Close supervision: Children who have acted out sexually with other children need continuous line of sight supervision with caregivers.

Clear rules: It is important that all members of the family know rules about privacy and appropriate sexual behaviors.

Adults in charge: Children with problem sexual behaviors should not assume a role of authority over other children.

No sexually explicit media: Sexually explicit materials in magazines, videos and movies, computer files, video games, websites, and television programs, should not be available to children.

Children should sleep in their room alone: The child with problematic sexual behaviors should not sleep in the same room or bed with other children.

How should I respond?

1. Try to stay calm.
2. Reassure your child that you care about them.
3. Remember you aren't alone.
4. Find social and professional support.

What leads to Problematic Sexual Behaviors?

Many factors can contribute to these behaviors, including:

- Seeing violence,
- Experiencing traumatic or scary events,
- Watching sexual acts (such as in a movie or music video),
- Exposure to sexual violence
- Other non-sexual behavior problems such as impulse control and difficulties with boundaries.