

## HEALING FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED AND THEIR FAMILIES

Facing sexual abuse is traumatic. Many families have lived through and survived sexual abuse. Families who are committed to healing are able to move on to a healthier way of living without the lasting effects that abuse can bring with it.

Sexual abuse affects the whole family. Everyone in the family may feel emotionally overwhelmed. Families and the individuals in them may change in ways that can feel uncomfortable and confusing.

Parents may experience a wide variety of feelings in the response to learning of your child's abuse, including shock, outrage, guilt, grief, depression, helplessness, hopelessness, and emotional numbness. Some parents may struggle with the desire to retaliate against the perpetrator.

Denial is common, both of the fact that abuse occurred and that the full "truth" about the abuse may never be known.

### DOES YOUR CHILD NEED THERAPY?

It can be useful for your child to be assessed by a mental health professional trained in the area of sexual abuse. An assessment will give you information, including a sense of how your child has been impacted by the abuse and recommendations regarding treatment. It can also help you determine if anyone else in your family would benefit from professional counseling.

It is important to your child and families recovery that you work with a therapist specifically trained in dealing with sexual abuse. This is a field requiring expertise.

Remember you have the right to ask questions and determine a therapist's suitability for your child's needs and your families needs. Below are some questions you could ask to help you select a therapist include:

- Do you work primarily with children, adults, or families?
- What are your credentials? What is your training and experience?
- Are you Board Certified or Licensed.
- How long have you worked in the area of sexual abuse counseling?
- With how many sexual abuse cases have you worked?
- Do you work with the entire family, or just the victim?
- Do you consult with other agency professionals?
- How does your kind of therapy work?
- What are the possible risks involved?
- About how long will it take?
- What should I do if I feel therapy is not working?
- What other type of therapy or help are there?

***Remember, your child, you, and your family can heal from the effects of sexual abuse. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Many families emerge from the trauma of sexual abuse stronger and more loving. YOUR FAMILY CAN TOO.***