

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

AN OVERVIEW OF CHILD ABUSE 101 AND HOW TO
RESPOND FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, EDUCATORS
AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

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River Bridge Regional Center (RBRC) is a nationally accredited child advocacy center (CAC). Located in Glenwood Springs, CO, RBRC provides services to Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin and Rio Blanco counties.

RBRC is a calm, neutral facility where law enforcement and child protection work together to investigate child abuse allegations. Forensic interviewers, mental health therapists, medical providers, and family advocates help children and families heal. The District Attorney's office helps hold offenders accountable. We coordinator as a multidisciplinary team to ensure proper communication and necessary services are provided. All referrals for our services come from Law Enforcement or the Department of Human Services.

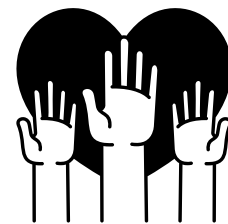
River Bridge also provides outreach and education to the community about child abuse, with the goal of prevention and breaking the cycle of abuse.

OUR MISSION

River Bridge provides collaborative services to child abuse victims, their families, and the community in a supportive environment through a child-centered approach.

OUR VISION

A community where children are safe, families are strong, and where all abused children are believed, supported and able to heal.



SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH A DONATION!

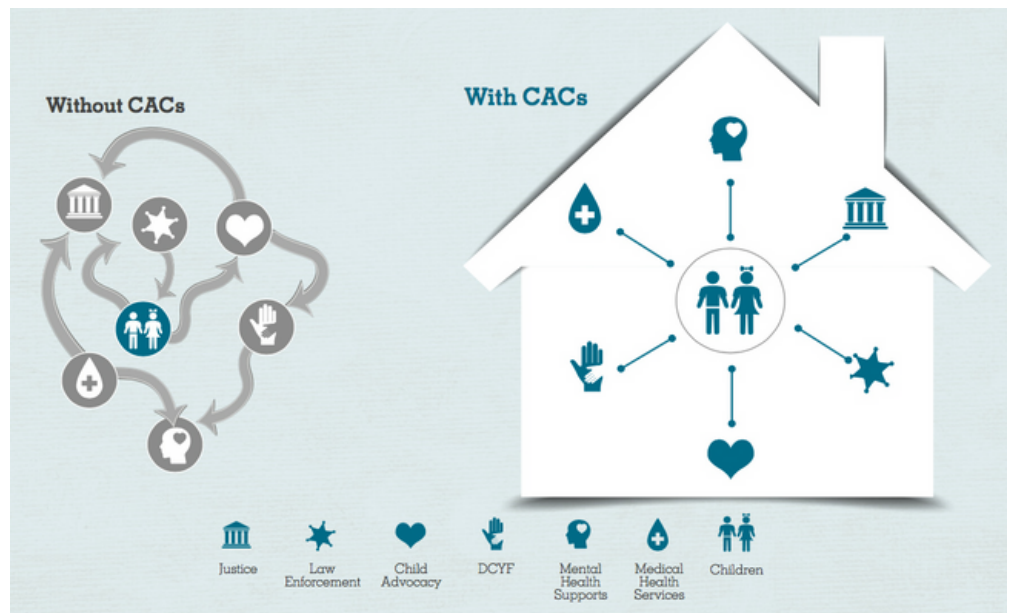
You can send in a check to our address
520 21st Street
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
Or make a secure online donation on our website
www.riverbridgerc.org or at
www.coloradogives.org/riverbridgeregionalcenter

CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING WITH RIVER BRIDGE!

- Playroom Volunteer
- Education and Outreach Committee Volunteer
- Fundraising Committee Volunteer
- Board Member

Why A Child Advocacy Center?

Without a CAC children have to go to multiple agencies and speak with multiple people about what happened to them, potentially retraumatizing the child. With a CAC, children come to one place and members of agencies come to the children. Children and families are able to have all of their needs met in one neutral, friendly setting that helps reduce anxiety and improve outcomes.



Our Services

We do not charge clients for any of our services, nor do we charge for any of our trainings or presentations. We work with our clients and assist with completing paperwork for Crime Victims Compensation and assist with accessing other resources in the communities we serve.

Forensic Interviews

A developmentally appropriate, non-leading and neutral conversation that allows a child to share their experience and provide information aiding in the investigate process.

Medical Examination and Consultations

Our forensic nurse examiners help ensure the health of children, address any medical needs, provide education and consultation to assure a child of their health.

Family Advocacy

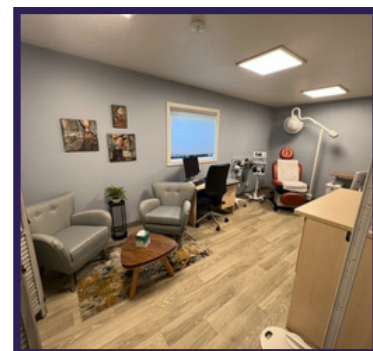
A family's guide during this vulnerable and confusing time. Our family advocate's provide resources and ensure their needs are met along the way.

Mental Health

Our mental health coordinators will provide referrals and evidence based therapy for children and their non-offending family members.

Community Outreach

Community outreach and education to the community to improve treatment and enhance the prevention of child abuse



River Bridge Regional Center is NOT A REPORTING AGENCY. All concerns and reports of child abuse, neglect, and/or witness to violence need to be reported to your County Child Protection/Human Services and your local Law Enforcement, or the Colorado Child Abuse Hotline.

DO YOU KNOW?



1 IN 8 CHILDREN

experience physical abuse

1 IN 5 GIRLS

experience sexual abuse

1 IN 20 BOYS

experience sexual abuse

Victims know over

90%

of abuse perpetrators, often in a position of trust
(family members, peers, neighbors, family friends)

30%

of abuse victims disclose
their abuse while they
are still children

10%

of child abuse disclosures
are reported to the
authorities.

When we don't talk openly about child abuse and prevention of child abuse, we aren't helping the children it's affecting or for the children it will affect.

CHILD ABUSE 101

Types of Abuse

- **Physical** - "Any case in which a child exhibits evidence of skin bruising, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling or death and either such condition or death is not justifiably explained."
- **Sexual** - "Any case in which a child is subject to sexual assault or molestation, sexual exploitation or prostitution."
- **Neglect** - "Any case in which a child is a child in need of services because the child's parents, legal guardian, or custodian fails to take the same actions to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision that a prudent parent would take."
- **Emotional** - "Is an identifiable and substantial impairment of the child's intellectual or psychological functioning or development or a substantial risk of impairment of the child's intellectual or psychological functioning or development."

What is "grooming"?

Abusers that are often known to the child will "groom" the child to trust them, control them, and also gain trust among other family members. Several tactics are used to keep the child from sharing "the secret."

- Gaining trust and regular access to the child
- Playing a role in the child's life
- Isolating the child

The purpose of grooming is:

- to manipulate the perceptions of other adults around the child.
- to manipulate the child into becoming a co-operating participant.
- **to reduce the likelihood of the abuse being detected.**
- **to reduce the likelihood of the child being believed if they do disclose.**

Why don't children tell right away?

Several factors can play into the child's inability to tell about abuse.

- The child may feel or fear shame and blame
- Think no one will believe them
- Love and loyalty for the perpetrator
- Fear of family disruption or getting into trouble
- May not have the language skills to communicate (due to age or disability)
- May not understand that the experience was/is abusive.
- Due to biology, the touching may have felt good
- Threats made by the perpetrator or accepting gifts by the perpetrator to keep the secret



We all play a role in preventing **child abuse and neglect**



1-844-CO-4-KIDS
(1-844-264-5437)

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SECRETS ARE NOT SAFE!

An abused child may tell other children to see how they react or to test the "normalcy" of what is happening to them or at home.

It's important to have open communication with your children about secrets they have with their friends.

- *You never want to keep a secret that hurts or prevents someone from getting help.*



Types of Disclosure

- **Accidental Disclosure** - Information is revealed by chance
 - the child is acting out
 - disclosure by another child
 - inappropriate play
 - child makes a statement not knowing the meaning
 - facebook chats
 - writing it down
- **Purposeful Disclosure** - Information is revealed via a conscious decision to tell by the child
 - Concerns of future abuse
 - Watching a program regarding abuse on television
 - School safety education program
 - Fear of seeing alleged perpetrator again

Disclosing abuse can be very scary and uncertain for children. It is often not as simple as just telling a trusted adult and moving forward to receive help.



Stages of Disclosure

- **Denial** - It is very common that victims initially deny abuse
- **Tentative** - Children are testing the waters to see how others will react.
- **Active** - Child makes coherent and sequential statements regarding abuse. Our forensic interviewers are trained to gather all necessary information.
- **Recant** - 22% of children will recant disclosures of abuse. Pressures from outside and inside the family or with friends can scare the child into recanting their statements.
- **Reaffirmation** - 96% of the children that recant will reaffirm their original disclosure.

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HOW TO RESPOND TO A CHILD'S DISCLOSURE

Listen. Then take action. Whether the child is your own or another child you know.

Believe the child

Take the child seriously. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing. For example, say, "I am sorry that happened to you. I'm glad you told me."

Make sure the child is safe

If you are worried about a child's immediate safety call 911 or your local Department of Human Services.

Consider any medical needs

He or she may need treatment for physical injuries. Know that law enforcement or human services may seek medical attention for the child.

If the child tells you about sexual abuse right after it happens, do not bathe the child or change his or her clothes because it may destroy evidence.

Listen

Ask only these four questions and write down what the child says:

1. What happened?
2. Who did this to you?
3. Where were you when this happened?
4. When did this happen?
5. Show that you understand and believe what the child tells you. **Do not ask for details.**

Show the child understanding

Tell the child he or she did the right thing by coming to you.

Be supportive

Reassure the child that he or she did nothing wrong. Explain that telling you about it was very brave and was the right thing to do.

Control your emotions

Don't act shocked - instead, try to be calm and reassuring. Fear and anger are normal reactions, but they can scare a child.

Help the child to know what to expect

Tell him or her what you will do to try to help. You might say something like: "I want to try to help you. I'm going to ask for help from another adult whose job it is to help kids with problems like this."

Respect the child

While you do need to report the incident, don't tell anyone about the abuse who doesn't need to know.

Be honest

Don't make any promises - particularly if the child asks you not to tell anyone else. Let the child know that in order to help, you will have to tell another trusted adult who wants to help the child, too.

To report suspected child abuse

Report to the Colorado State Hotline, they will forward you to the correct county agency, human services, or law enforcement.

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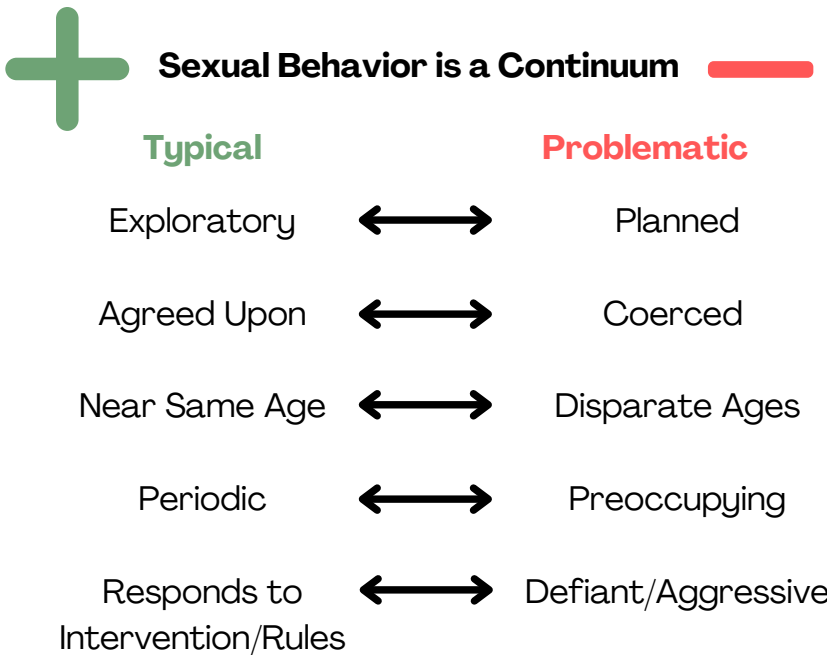
PROBLEMATIC SEXUALIZED BEHAVIOR (PSB)

Commonly seen in adolescents and younger children

Roughly 20% of the cases that have come to our Center in the past five years, youth or children under the age of 18 have acted out against another child. Children with PSBs are rising country-wide.

Sexual development does begin in infancy and some sexual behaviors and knowledge are typical for children as they grow up.

Developmentally appropriate sexual play would be characterized by:



MISCONCEPTION

Children with PSBs have been considered to be dangerous, deviant, perpetrators who must be sent away to protect the community.

FACTS

- There are multiple causes and pathways to PSBs
- Not all children with PSB are victims of sexual abuse
- Outpatient, evidence-based treatment with active involvement of the caregivers is highly effective
- Safety and protection plans must be individualized for the child, family, school, and others involved.
- Using children-first language can help how we think about and respond to the child.



IF A CHILD UP TO AGE 17 AND 364 DAYS DISCLOSES ABUSE, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT.

MANDATORY REPORTING

A **mandatory reporter** is defined as a professional who is obligated by law to report known or suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect. Mandatory reporters are part of the safety net that protects children and youth and have the ability to provide lifesaving help to child victims in our community. Any person specified in C.R.S. 19-3-304 is by law a mandatory reporter in Colorado. If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the mandatory reporter shall immediately upon receiving such information report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department, the local law enforcement agency, or through the child abuse reporting hotline system.

State law C.R.S.19-3-304 outlines the persons required by law to report child abuse and/or neglect.

But if you suspect abuse, no matter if you are a "mandated" reported or not, the right thing to do is make a call.

CAN I REMAIN ANONYMOUS?

Yes, you can remain anonymous. Child protective services and its employees are required by law not to disclose the name of the mandatory reporter to the family. However, this confidentiality does not apply to reports made to law enforcement.

In addition, it is possible that as a reporter of child abuse and/or neglect, you may be called to testify at a civil or criminal trial regarding the allegations. The victim's parent and/or family members may be present at that hearing. Remember, it is important that you act as the eyes and ears for the child protection safety net.

AM I LIABLE IF I WAS WRONG?

It is better to be safe than sorry - make the call.

Colorado state law indicates that:

Individuals or institutions in Colorado who report suspected child abuse and/or neglect "shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, or termination of employment that otherwise might result by reason of such acts of participation, unless a court of competent jurisdiction determines that such person's behavior was willful, wanton, and malicious" if they report in "good faith," which means they have not reported recklessly or with no reasonable basis for making a report.

Colorado state law indicates that good faith is presumed unless challenged by the person claiming the report was not made in good faith. Making a child abuse and/or neglect report is your evidence that you fulfilled your mandate to report.

Source: C.R.S. 19-3-304 and C.R.S. 19-3-309

If reports of maltreatment are not made, appropriate services will not be delivered to the children and families who need them. Without your call, the abuse and/or neglect may continue.

We all play a role in preventing **child abuse and neglect**



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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MAKE THE CALL?



When you call to report a concern or get help for yourself or someone else, your call is answered by a certified call taker and information is gathered to help a group of professionals assess whether your call or "referral" should be screened in to the child protection system (CPS).

Be prepared with the necessary information to make a clear report. The hotline worker will ask several questions to get as much needed information. The call may take up to 20 minutes, so make sure you have the time and space to make the call. Information about the child that you may be asked for:

- Name and age of the child
- Parents/caregivers names and ages
- Address and Phone number of child and parents/caregiver
- Race/Ethnicity of the child and parents
- Any developmental delays or disabilities for the child and/or parent
- Any other family or household members
- Incident Date and Location
- Description of concern

Based on the information you provide and information other callers may have provided in the past about the same family, a group of professionals review, evaluate and direct the actions that should be taken to help the family. If your call is screened out, you or the family in need may still be connected with local family support resources.

After you make a report, it will be sent to child protective services (CPS). When CPS receives a report, the CPS worker reviews the information and determines if an assessment is needed. The CPS worker may talk with the family, the child, or others to help determine what is making the child unsafe. The CPS worker can help parents or other caregivers get services, education, or other assistance.

It's natural for an outsider to feel stressed over determining if something isn't right. You don't have to be the expert on whether it is abuse or not. Make the call and let the professionals at Human Services and Child Protection determine how to move forward with the concern.



More than 70% of children involved with children's services in Colorado are helped in their own homes.

Whenever possible, county human services agencies try to ensure the safety of the child(ren) in their own home by connecting parents and caregivers with support and services. Being removed from your home can be a scary experience for a child, one that case workers try to avoid if at all possible.



If it is not possible to ensure the safety and well-being of a child(ren) in their own home, a caseworker looks to family or friends willing to provide a temporary home for the child(ren) while the parent or caregiver works to improve the situation at home. These families are known as "kinship families" and they are connected with support and resources to help avoid placement in foster care.

CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION

Resources on our website www.riverbridgerc.org

Podcasts and Books for Parents for Child Abuse Prevention

- riverbridgerc.org/podcasts
- riverbridgerc.org/childrens-books/

Information on keeping your child safe while online

- riverbridgerc.org/internet-and-social-media-safety/

Continuing your education around child abuse, mandatory reporting, mental health therapy, and medical exams.

- riverbridgerc.org/learn-about-abuse/
- riverbridgerc.org/get-trained/

Have River Bridge host a training for your school, daycare, or parent group!

Examples of trainings we do for our community:

- Child Abuse 101 and the Child Advocacy Center Response
- Mandatory Reporter Training
- Social Media & Internet Safety
- Healthy Sexual Behavior & Development in Children

We can customize training on your specific needs, just reach out to Mary Cloud at mary@riverbridgerc.org



Need more information or have additional questions?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

info@riverbridgerc.org



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