

5 Ways to Prevent Child Abuse

Every adult in the community can play a role in supporting and protecting military children. If you're worried about the well-being of a military child, share your concerns with Family Advocacy Program staff. They can help you determine what to do next.

1. Know the signs.

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Always preparing for something bad to happen
- Frequently lacking adult supervision
- Fading bruises or other marks after an absence from school
- Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Being frightened of a parent or caregiver
- Abusing animals or pets

2. Be a trusted adult.

Let children know they can come to you with any concern and that you will:

- Listen without judgment.
- Believe them.
- Help and support them.

3. Make the call.

If you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, do the right thing:

- Call your [installation's Family Advocacy Program](#).
- Call your local Child Protective Services office.
- Call the [Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](#) at 800-422-4453.
- Call 911 or military law enforcement if a child is in immediate danger.

4. Identify trusted adults.

- Talk with your child about specific people they can trust.
- Discuss when your child should talk to a trusted adult.
- Let them know they can go to another trusted adult if the first one doesn't help.

5. Empower your child's voice.

- Teach children early about healthy body boundaries.
- Tell them to trust their feelings.
- Encourage them to say forcefully, "I don't like that," or "Stop touching me."
- Remind them to leave a situation that makes them uncomfortable.
- Ask them to tell a trusted adult right away if something makes them uncomfortable.
- Talk with them about how to listen to and help their peers.

Share these resources.

Teach your kids healthy body boundaries.
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting/children-youth-teens/teach-your-kids-healthy-boundaries/>

Support for military kids.
<https://militarykidsconnect.health.mil/Feelings/How-to-Talk-to-an-Adult>

Start Prevention Tips Early

While all adults can make a positive impact in a child's life by following these tips, parents and caregivers play an important role in protecting children. Parents and caregivers, talk with your children about tips 4 and 5 early and often.

Get installation support.