

Signs That a Child or Teen May Be At-Risk to Sexually Harm Another Child (From Stop It Now .org)

More than a third of all sexual abuse of children is committed by someone under the age of 18. Children, particularly younger children, may take part in inappropriate interactions without understanding how it might be hurtful to others. For this reason, it may be more helpful to talk about a child's sexually "harmful" behavior rather than sexually "abusive" behavior. Below are signs that a child or teen may be at risk to harm another child.

- May experience typical gestures of friendliness or affection as sexual.
- Explores his or her own natural sexual curiosity with younger children or those of differing size, status, ability, or power.
- Seeks out the company of younger children and spends an unusual amount of time with them rather than with peers.
- Takes younger children to "secret" places or hideaways or plays "special" games with them (e.g. playing doctor, undressing or touching games, etc.).
- Insists on physical contact with a child when the child resists the attention.
- Tells you they do not want to be alone with a child, or group of children, or becomes anxious about being with a particular young person.
- Was physically, sexually or emotionally abused and has not been offered adequate resources and support for recovery.
- Seems to be crying for help, i.e. behaves as if they want to be caught; leaves "clues" or acts in ways that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
- Links sexuality and aggression in language or behavior (e.g. makes sexual threats or insults).
- Unable to control inappropriate sexual behaviors involving another child after being told to stop.
- Engages in sexually harassing behavior.
- Shares alcohol, drugs, or sexual material with younger children or teens.
- Views sexual images of children on the Internet or elsewhere.
- Forces sexual interaction, including direct contact and non-contact (like exposing genitals) on another adolescent or child.

If you recognize any of these signs in a child or teen you know, make sure that your child is safe and protected from being exposed to any of these harmful behaviors. Talk to your child to determine if anything "harmful" took place. Bring the harmful behaviors of the child or teen to the attention of the child's parent, teacher or care taker. If the problem continues you may decide to make a police report (for children not living in the same household).

