



## Information for Parents

### **I am worried that my child may have been sexually abused by the man I heard about in the news. What should I do?**

- First, stay calm.
- Report your concerns to the Leominster Police Department (tel: 978-534-7560).
  - The Police Department is working closely with state agencies, including the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and the District Attorney's Office.
- Your child does NOT need immediate medical care.
  - Unless your child appears to be ill, you do not need to take your child to an emergency department.
  - If you have questions about when to get medical care for your child, you can call your child's doctor to discuss it.
- You may need an appointment for your child to see a specially trained doctor who works just with children who may have been abused. Your child's doctor can advise you.
  - The Child Protection Program at the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center in Worcester provides specialized medical services for children suspected of being victims of abuse.
  - Contact the Child Protection Program by calling 774-442-6629 weekdays from 8:30 am to 5 pm. Staff can assist you in determining your child's medical needs.

### **My child came to me to say she was abused. How should I talk with her?**

- Encourage her to talk freely. Do not make judgmental comments. Show that you understand and take seriously what the child is saying.
- Assure your child that she did the right thing in telling you. A child may feel guilty about revealing the secret or feel frightened if the abuser has threatened harm for telling the secret.
- Tell the child that she is not to blame for the sexual abuse. Asking your child "Why didn't you tell me?" is the first reaction of many parents, but this question can make your child feel she did something wrong.
- Tell the child you will protect her and that the abuse will not happen again.

### **I have noticed some "sexual" behavior in my child and wonder if it normal or a sign of abuse.**

- Some sexual behavior in children is normal and depends upon the age of your child. For example, "normal" behaviors for children ages 2 to 6 years may include:
  - Touching genitals in public/private
  - Viewing/touching peer or new sibling genitals
  - Standing/sitting too close to other children or adults
  - Trying to look at other children or adults naked or using the bathroom
- Your child's doctor is a good person to talk to if you have specific questions about what is "normal" behavior for your child.

**More information on the web.**

- Symptoms of abuse. Psychological support for abused children.  
*American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:*  
[www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/child\\_sexual\\_abuse](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/child_sexual_abuse)
- Symptoms of abuse. What to do if abuse is suspected.  
*American Academy of Pediatrics:*  
[www.aap.org/publiced/BK5\\_ChildAbuse\\_prevent.htm](http://www.aap.org/publiced/BK5_ChildAbuse_prevent.htm)
- Overview of child abuse.  
*Enough Child Abuse Campaign:*  
[www.enoughabuse.org](http://www.enoughabuse.org)
- Specialized medical care for abused children.  
*Child Protection Program at UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center:*  
[www.umassmemorial.org/childprotection](http://www.umassmemorial.org/childprotection)



## **Information for Medical Providers (Emergency Departments and Pediatric Primary Care)**

### ***Response to Community Concerns Re: Child Abuse***

The Child Protection Program at UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center provides these guidelines to emergency department and primary care colleagues responding to family concerns in response to the multiple cases of child abuse recently identified in the Greater Leominster community.

#### **Investigation Process:**

- Parents and other authorities are instructed to report abuse related to the Leominster situation directly to the Leominster Police Department at 978-534-7560.
  - Family will be referred to the two detectives handling the case, who are coordinating with Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the DA's office.
- If DCF is contacted via the hotline (800-792-5200), tell the worker you are calling in regards to a child who may have been a victim in the Leominster case.

#### **Medical Process for Children Identified in the Leominster Case:**

- Unless the abuse occurred within the last 72 hours, these children do not need urgent/emergent medical evaluation or rape kit collection.
- Suggested steps to follow when children present in an emergency department or in primary care physician office:
  1. Obtain basic history of parental concern; if possible, obtain information from parent/caregiver without child present.
  2. Obtain standard past medical history/family history/social history, etc.
  3. Specific ROS of genital complaints, such as: itchiness, discharge, unusual bleeding, urination or defecation difficulties.
  4. If ROS positive/concerning for STI, send urine for gonorrhea and Chlamydia nucleic acid amplification testing, and offer family serum testing for HIV, RPR, and Hep B and C.
  5. If symptoms and/or family request, do external genital exam (no speculum), in addition to complete physical examination, and thoroughly document findings in the medical record.
  6. If any concerns about acute injuries or genital abnormalities, contact UMass Memorial Child Protection Program physician: business hours (774-442-6629); nonbusiness hours (508-426-0609).
- Next steps:
  - Families can call the Child Protection Program at the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center (1-774-442-6629) during business hours – weekdays, 8:30 am-5 pm – to schedule a medical appointment for specialist external genital examination and further referrals as required.