

Hyde County Hotline, Inc.

24-Hours Crisis Line 252-925-2500

Visit us at: HydeCounty-Hotline.org Facebook: [Hyde County Hotline](#)

Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse



Many people may believe that most sexual assault survivors we see in our office have been recently victimized by a stranger that jumped out of the bushes in the dark of the night. This is rarely the case. Unfortunately, the survivors that seek services may have been recently victimized; however, they may also be suffering with trauma from childhood sexual abuse.

Often perpetrators of sexual assault are someone the victim knows, or even someone they love and trust. Many kids have been told not to talk to strangers, but sometimes it's the people they know who can hurt them the most. 93% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator.¹ and 68% are abused by family members.² Every 9 minutes a child is sexually assaulted in the United States.³

When a child experiences sexual abuse by family members or in their home environment, basic needs and their psychological development may become impaired. For instance, learning to trust and feel secure can be challenging. Additionally, their emotional skills may be limited and their self-esteem can be lowered. Often times, a child may be told they are lying or their support system pretends that nothing happened. These factors, and many others, can contribute to the adult survivor taking a very long time to connect what happened in their childhood and understand how it may be affecting them today.

Some Common Signs for Childhood Sexual Abuse Survivors:⁴

- Feeling like it was their fault
- Guilt/Shame/Low Self-Esteem
- Difficulty developing and maintaining relationships
- Isolation
- Physical ailments, such as stomach and gynecological problems
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse or Addiction
- Numbing or feeling disconnected from their bodies
- Fear
- Hatred
- Promiscuity
- Eating Disorders
- Changes in Life Style
- Self-Injurious Behaviors

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- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) ((PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.)
- Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) (RTS is the psychological trauma experienced by a rape victim that includes disruptions to normal physical, emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal behavior.)

Physical Effects of Sexual Assault:⁴

Research shows that survivors of sexual abuse have more medical problems, high-risk behaviors, family physician visits, hospitalizations and surgeries compared to individuals who have not been sexually abused.

- Long term genital or anal discomfort with no medical cause.
- Headaches
- Stomach Aches
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Reproduction System Damage
- Sexual Dysfunction

Some Helpful Tips on How to Support a Disclosure of Childhood Sexual Abuse:

It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted, especially if they are a friend or family member. For a survivor, disclosing to someone they care about can be very difficult, so we encourage you to be as supportive and non-judgmental as possible.

Sometimes support means providing resources, such as how to reach the local sexual assault service provider, seeking counseling or therapy. Most often listening is the best way to support a survivor. The survivor should always get to make the choice of what action is taken after they disclose. If they choose to share with you, you should respect and support the decisions they make related to this disclosure.

Here are some specific phrases recommended by the RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline to be supportive through a survivor's healing process.⁵

“I believe you. / It took a lot of courage to tell me about this.” It can be extremely difficult for survivors to come forward and share their story. They may feel ashamed or concerned that they won't be believed, or worried they'll be blamed. Validate their feelings, but don't try to “fix” them. Leave any “why” questions or investigations to the experts—your job is to support this person. Be careful not to interpret calmness as a sign that the event did not occur—everyone responds to traumatic events differently. The best thing you can do is to believe them.

“It's not your fault. / You didn't do anything to deserve this.” Survivors may blame themselves, especially if they know the perpetrator personally. Remind the survivor, maybe even more than once, that they are not to blame.

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“You are not alone. / I care about you and am here to listen or help in any way I can.” Let the survivor know that you are there for them and willing to listen to their story if they are comfortable sharing it. Assess if there are people in their life they feel comfortable going to, and remind them that there are service providers who will be able to support them as they heal from the experience.

“I’m sorry this happened. / This shouldn’t have happened to you.” Acknowledge that the experience has affected their life. Phrases like “This must be really tough for you,” and, “I’m so glad you are sharing this with me,” help to communicate empathy.

Believe the survivor, even if their memories are vague or they are still trying to accept that this may have happened to them and listen to them with respect. The event may have happened a long time ago, but that doesn’t mean the pain is gone. Check in with the survivor to remind them you still care about their well-being and believe their story. Encourage them to seek help and support services and always treat them as the strong courageous person they are.

Is healing possible? **Absolutely!** However, it is not something that happens overnight. Making the decision to go through the healing process is a first step. At times it can be very painful, but with support and commitment it can be done. Hyde County Hotline offers services to aid in a survivor’s healing. Survivors and their support system can always speak to someone on our **24-Hour Crisis Line 252-925-2500.**

(¹Sources: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics ²U.S. Department of Justice. "Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics," ³U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ⁴NSVRC & Sexual Assault Center ⁵RAINN.org - Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

Thriving...

I was forced to enter the basement of my soul and look directly at what was hidden there, to choose, in the face of it all, not death but life.” ~ Henri Nowwen

Often it's hard to make this choose without support.



Crisis Line Training

Hyde County Hotline is looking for dedicated volunteers who would be willing to attend Crisis Line Training. If you would like a way to reach out to the hurting in your community and give them hope in their time of need, please consider being a volunteer on the Crisis Line.

This training is free and this volunteer service can be completed in the comfort and safety of your own home.

The Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our volunteers help us provide confidential, accurate information, referrals and options. Victims are treated with respect and have the right to choose what is right for them without judgment. You will be taught how to answer crisis calls, complete a danger assessment, complete safety planning, and provide needed resources to victims.

Victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and human trafficking can access safe shelter and advocacy by calling our **24-Hour Crisis Line at 252-925-2500.**

Please give us a call to let us know you would be interested in taking part in this training.

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NO ONE DESERVES TO BE BOUGHT OR SOLD!

Human Trafficking-Learn the Signs

Human Trafficking is one of the most difficult crimes to spot, because victims are ordinary people. However, there are signs that can help identify yourself and others as potential trafficking victims. Learning the red flags and potential indicators is the first step in getting the help you or a victim needs.

Do you or someone you know experience the following:

Common Work and Living Conditions:

- Is providing sexual acts or work in exchange for services/benefits
- Not free to leave or come and go as they wish
- Under 18 and is providing paid sex acts
- Has a pimp/manager or someone who will never leave their side
- Unpaid or paid very little by tips off the record (in cash)
- Works long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or has unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- Work or living space features tinted windows, boarded up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.(anything that makes it difficult to see inside)

Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior:

- Fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Unusually afraid or anxious around law enforcement or when law enforcement is brought up
- Avoids eye contact
- Overly attached to one person or has one person overly attached to them

Poor Physical Health:

- No access to health care
- Appears malnourished or skinny
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture like bruises, cuts, etc.

Lack of Control:

- Has very little personal property, wears the same clothes over and over again
- Paid mostly in cash and not in control of their own money, no financial records, or bank account
- Not in control of their own identification documents (ID or passport) or had them taken by their employer
- Not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

Other:

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is living
- Does not know where they are and/or do not know what city they are in
- No sense of time
- Their story does not add up or make sense

~Information shared from **Project No Rest**

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What We Do...

- Crisis Intervention
- Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking Advocacy
- Survivor Services
- Safe Shelter
- Safety Planning
- Support Groups and Referrals
- Program Presentations for Adults and Children in Churches, Businesses and Schools
- Referrals



How You Can Help...

- Ask how we can help you
- Ask us about presentations
- Tell Others about us
- Become a Crisis Line Volunteer
- Donate to our Thrift Store
- Ask for a copy of our shelter needs list
- Monetary Donations are accepted

We would like to send a great big
“THANK YOU”
to all of our volunteers!
**You make a difference in our communities
and make it possible for lives to be
changed!**

***THE GENEROUS WILL PROSPER. THOSE
WHO REFRESH OTHERS WILL
THEMSELVES BE REFRESHED.
PROVERBS 11:25 (NLT)***

Thank you to the N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement-Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Program and US DHHS and the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission for financial support.

FYSB Family & Youth
Services Bureau

Family Violence Prevention
& Services Program



**Council for Women &
Youth Involvement**
Department of Administration