

Boundaries and keeping yourself safe - for foster, relative and kinship carers

It is important to be aware that your actions or those of your family may be misinterpreted by a child or young person in your care.

To guard against misunderstandings or false accusations, ensure that there are clear boundaries that you all understand. When a child or young person has been sexually abused this is particularly important. For example touching may be seen as a sexual advance. Below are some guidelines that may help guide your family to a safer place for all concerned, take the time to talk about these guidelines to others in your family.

Privacy

Everyone has a right to privacy. Knock when a door is closed. Respect everyone else's privacy. Locks on doors are not required.

Bedrooms

Ideally children, especially an older child should have their own personal space by way of a bedroom however it is understood that this is not always possible. Personal space can be created in other parts of house that can be declared for that child only as a thinking place, for example a cubby house.

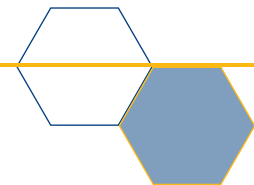
Affection

Cuddling and kissing children is an important part of parenting and is vitally important to children's well being. Be aware that children who have experienced abuse and neglect may interpret physical contact differently. You need to be alert to this and informed of their history of abuse so that you can better understand the context of their reactions. If the child in your care resists your physical contact this is fine, find other ways of letting them know you care for them.

Be conscious that wrestling and tickling can also be misconstrued by a child with a history of abuse, limit these kinds of activities or at the very least ensure that the child is o.k. with this as a form of fun.

Sexuality

Family members need sexuality information that is appropriate to their age and development. It is also important that children are provided with the proper words for their bodies and sexual organs, this is part of the protective behaviour we need to instill in children. Suggestive or obscene language is inappropriate.



No secrets

There must not be any secret games, especially secrets with adults. Be clear as to the differences between secrets and surprises.

Being alone with one other person

In situations of significant abuse where children / young people are behaving suggestively or seductively or aggressively, be careful to not place yourself in a situation where you have no witnesses.

Keep records

Keep a written log/diary, noting and dating all incidents, no matter how trivial, stick to factual information.

Communication

Report issues to your relative care support worker and or Families SA social worker as soon as possible. Share any incidents or feelings which make you feel uncomfortable.

Open communication within your family, encourage honest and free discussion between yourselves and your children. It is important that your own children feel able to tell you if something isn't right. Don't let the situation overload you. Share problems and difficulties. You have the right to say NO.

Discipline and supervision

Abide by the Families SA Discipline Policy and Foster Carers Charter Commitments

Supervise closely; know where the children are and what they are doing at all times

Education and training

Teach children to attend to their own needs where possible, e.g. toileting, bathing.

Participate in further education - training, update knowledge and skill.

Personal and family behavior

Family members should think about their family patterns of behaviours (e.g. nudity, privacy, play, secrets, washing) and identify situations, which may be misinterpreted.

The use of Marijuana and other illicit drugs is illegal. Use will raise concern and possible deregistration as a carer.

The information in this publication can be provided in an alternative format or another language on request.

Please contact 8413 9069

