

For this month's research article I thought I would pass on some information about protecting your children from sexual abuse. I work for an agency called NOVA (Network of Victim Assistance) that supports, counsels and empowers victims of sexual assault and other serious crimes and works to eliminate violence in Bucks County through advocacy, community education and prevention programs. The following is a short article written by my Executive Director with general tips on how to protect your children. For more detailed information visit www.darkness2light.org/7Steps/7steps.asp. This site gives 7 informative steps on exactly how to protect children and signs to look for. For more information on NOVA, visit www.NOVABucks.org.

As always, please feel free to contact me, Denise Bauer, at kdjnbauer@verizon.net if you have a topic you would like me to research.



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To the Editor

RE: Protecting our children from sexual predators

From Barbara Clark

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The recent indictment of Lewes, Delaware, pediatrician Earl Bradley has sparked discussions and concerns among parents who fear for the safety of their children. When situations like these arise, it is a reminder to us all about the importance of talking to our children about personal safety. Some tips we promote in NOVA's school programs include:

- Just as you talk about fire safety and seat belt safety, talk to your child about personal safety and sexual abuse. Teach children about body safety and the difference between "safe" and "not safe" touches.
- Avoid focusing exclusively on "stranger danger." Most children are abused by someone they know and trust.
- Let children know that they have the right to make decisions about their bodies. Empower them to say no when they do not want to be touched, even in non-sexual ways (e.g., politely refusing hugs).
- Listen when your child tries to tell you something, especially when it seems hard for him/her to talk about it.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uneasy about leaving a child alone with someone, don't do it. If you're concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions. Be an advocate for your child.
- Tell someone in authority if you suspect that your own or someone else's child is being abused.
- Encourage your child's school to host a prevention program from NOVA to reinforce the safety rules.

Sexual assault involves power and control over the victim. Predators can be quite slick and often find victims who may be particularly susceptible to manipulation and threats. Children and others who may not be believed or who are physically or socially isolated from others can be targets. Please remember: it is never the victim's fault, and when it comes to our children, we must listen carefully, ask questions of others and learn to trust our instincts without apology.