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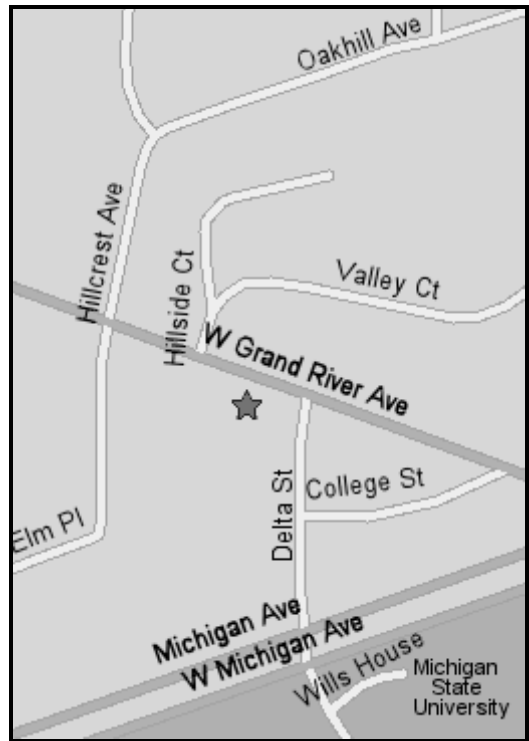
Name _____
Street _____
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Please mail this sheet to:

The Listening Ear, Attn: SAC
313 West Grand River Ave.
East Lansing, MI 48823-4213

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The Listening Ear is a non-profit crisis center located in East Lansing, Michigan. We have served the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year without interruption since 1969.



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Sexual Assault Counseling

Talking to Children About Sexual Assault

The Listening Ear
313 West Grand River
East Lansing, MI 48823-4213

(517) 337-1717

24-hour Crisis Center

It can be difficult to talk to our children about sexual assault. We may feel that children are not ready to talk about such a horrible crime. Also, we may feel unprepared to answer the questions a child may ask.

Unfortunately, even young children are not safe from rape. Half of all rapes are committed against boys and girls eighteen years or younger. One in six are committed against children younger than twelve.

There are many types of sexual assault. They can include:

- Sexual touching or fondling
- Exposing children to sexual activity or pornography
- Having children pose, undress, or act out sexual activities
- Forcing children to perform sexual acts

Children have been taught to obey grown-ups, which makes them more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Nobody wants to imagine that their child could be raped, but the best way to help children take care of themselves is to talk to them.

Here are some suggestions for talking to children about rape.

*1. Explain that **nobody** has the right to touch them in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.*

Children have the right to say no to touching that makes them uncomfortable – even if it’s by a person your child knows. Nobody has the right to touch their “Swimsuit Area” – the parts of their body that would be covered by their swimsuit.

2. Reassure your children that they can always talk to you about anything that’s bothering them.

Rape is always scary to talk about. For children, it’s even harder. Child molesters often threaten their victims. Children may be told that nobody will believe them. It’s important to let your children know that you’ll always be there to listen.

3. Teach your children that it’s not just strangers who might try to hurt them.

The fact is, 80% of sexual assaults are committed by a friend, family member, or acquaintance – **not** by a stranger. Explain that even if somebody is a friend or family member, inappropriate touching is still wrong.

4. Tell your children that they are never to blame for sexual abuse.

Child molesters may say the abuse is the child’s fault, that it wouldn’t have happened if the child wasn’t “bad”. Rape survivors often blame themselves; self-blame can be even stronger in children. Children should know that if they are molested, it is **never** their fault.

5. Tell your children that it’s okay to ask questions if they’re confused.

Teaching children the proper terms for body parts will help, but they may still be uncomfortable asking about “forbidden” topics. Explain that it’s okay to ask questions, and that you won’t get angry if they ask about rape, sex or their bodies.

6. Finally, remember to take care of yourself as well.

Rape is a frightening topic, one that’s hard to talk about. You may feel angry, helpless, overwhelmed, or afraid. Something you might try is asking your partner or another relative you trust to help you talk to your child. If you need to talk, you can also call the Listening Ear at 517-337-1717.