Most people are unaware that children often abuse children. This is often difficult because parents do not want to believe that another child is capable of sexually abusing others. Also, it is not easy to identify potentially abusive behaviors. Children may engage in inappropriate behaviors with other children but lack the knowledge to understand the hurtful impact it has on others. According to the National Awareness Center, Inc. over a third of all sexual abuse of children is committed by someone who is under the age of 18.

Without intervention, redirection and therapy these children can grow up to abuse children as adults. It is extremely important that professionals, caretakers and parents seek advice and treatment immediately whenever there is a concern or question about a child’s behavior. It is essential that adults have all the information needed to recognize potentially harmful activities. Communication is key. Talking to children about their activities, school and friendships on a daily basis is going to help you set standards for what is considered age-appropriate sexual behavior. As parents, caregivers and professionals it is essential to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy sexual development behavior in children. Below is a list of books that discuss treating children with sexually abusive behavior problems and understanding what is healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior.

**Sexually Reactive Children in Adoption and Foster Care** by Joan McNamara (1994). This anthology discusses the complicated intertwining of abuse and attachment and the need to effectively respond to children’s abusive-reactive behaviors.

**Adoption and Sexually Abused Children** by Joan McNamara (1990). This book in twelve chapters draws on the experience and wisdom from a variety of experts, covering a wide range of issues in the complex area of adoption and sexually abused children.

**A Guide for Parents of Children Who Molest** by Eliana Gil (1995). This pamphlet is for parents who face a crisis when their child molest, and who must resolved their own feelings of denial, anger and shame while helping their children through this difficult time. This is particularly stressful time when there is sibling sexual abuse.

**Treating Children with Sexually Abusive Behavior Problems** by Jan Burton (1998). This book provides “Guidelines for Practice” in the first part, which describes different approaches and treatments. The book links together individual, group and family treatment into one integrated, comprehensive program that treats both the perpetrator and victim in tandem.

**Understanding Your Child’s Sexual Behavior: What’s Natural and Healthy** by Toni Cavanagh Johnson (1999). The readable, easily understood book for parents and caregivers explains children’s developing sexuality—when their behaviors are normal and when to be concerned.

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**Crisis/Support**
National Confidential Helpline
888-PREVENT (773-8368)
Support for Parents at: stopitnow.org/mn/parents.html

To learn more about MN ADOPT and our efforts to ensure each child will have a permanent family, call 612-861-7115 or visit www.mnadopt.org