

## Are Children Safe?

Child Enrichment is a safe haven for children who have been abused. All of us see the headlines, read the news articles, and watch the television coverage with the gruesome details of child abuse, child abduction, child sexual abuse, and even murder. Yet, as professionals who work with victims of child abuse, we not only experience the reality and horror of the abuses perpetuated upon children, we must look into the eyes of the children who have been abused. In those eyes we see fear and stress and distrust, but we also see hope. For Child Enrichment employees, board members and volunteers, it is all about hope. The standards set by Child Enrichment about child protection and promoting the respect for children in general, are applied beyond the walls of our buildings. In attempting to raise the awareness in the community and with other professionals whom we work with, we continually aim the focus on the children and their needs. Last year, Child Enrichment provided counseling, court advocacy, or forensic interviewing services to 828 children.

Children are not safe. Children have died because of physical abuse this year in our community. In the United States millions of children are physically abused each year and thousands of children die because of physical abuse. Most who die are under the age of six. There is proof that hundreds of thousands of children are sexually abused each year and it is estimated that millions of other cases go undetected. Many cases of child sexual abuse are not disclosed until the victim reaches adulthood. Children are most often abused by people whom they know and trust. How can this be? As adults in this society, there is only one answer to these problems. We (all adults) must step up and address the issue directly.

So, the answer to the question, Are Children Safe? IS: it depends. Yes, if adults are doing everything possible to keep them safe, and No, if the children are vulnerable, unsupervised, lonely, depressed, or fearful. For the most part, we should consider Children to not be safe. Children are not capable of protecting themselves. Children need adults to protect them.

Yet, most adults seem to fear getting involved. If an adult understands child abuse and child sexual abuse, they will probably do something to help. If an adult resists knowing, they feel less obligated to help. Or, maybe they would help, if they knew how to. So, here is how to help.

Regardless of whether you are capable of looking into the eyes of abused children, you can experience their hope, and you can help. You can make a difference ! Make a donation. Volunteer at this or another Child Advocacy program. Learn about Child Abuse. Visit the Darkness to Light web page at: [www.D2L.org](http://www.D2L.org) Help make your community safe for children and communicate clearly that adults who may harm children are not welcome and will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law. These are all good beginnings. Thank you.

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