



Stop It Now! Georgia

The Campaign to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse



**Prevent Child Abuse
Georgia**

a program of

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Press Release

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Valuable Lessons From Michael Jackson Trial

Atlanta – June 14, 2005: Georgians were tuned in as the jury handed down Monday's verdict in the Michael Jackson trial. However, the hype surrounding the trial caused many to lose sight of the fact that 88 percent of child sexual abuse cases go unreported and of those cases that do go to trial, only three percent result in conviction. What can parents do?

"Adults are a key part of the solution to child sexual abuse. We must all start talking about this issue with other adults; learn the warnings signs of an adult or youth at risk to sexually abuse a child; recognize situations and environments that put children at risk; and take action when we see a problem," says Sally Thigpen, statewide coordinator for the Stop it Now! Georgia program of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. "The child protection and law enforcement systems we often rely on as solutions are not set up to prevent, they are intended to intervene. That's why it is so important for adults to step up and be the front line in preventing child sexual abuse."

Points to consider:

- ▶ Children who are victims of sexual abuse often know, like, and trust the perpetrators.
- ▶ Offenders are often people who genuinely like children.
- ▶ "Grooming" behaviors typically occur over an extended period of time and include progressively intrusive behaviors (showing pornography, touching, being physically close to the child in non-sexual ways to reduce their resistance, including such things as the introduction of alcohol, etc.)
- ▶ Children often feel confused about the offender – and may give conflicting information or recant their stories out of fear or to protect the offender.
- ▶ Child abusers often choose children who are vulnerable (health, self esteem problems, weak parental supervision, etc.)

These are all facts that are irrefutable – and exactly the reason why Michael Jackson was put on trial. He exhibited warning signs.

(more)



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The good news is that these warning signs can be learned and recognized by all of us. If the reality of child sexual abuse is that children often know, love, and trust their abusers – that means that we adults also know, love, and trust adults at risk to sexually abuse children.

If you had concerns about someone you know or a friend or family member and their behaviors toward a child, would you be able to discuss your concerns with them or with others? If so, you could play a key role in preventing child sexual abuse. Stop It Now! Georgia has a free information guide to help you take action. Call our HELPLINE 1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373) to receive your free copy. (Helpline open from 8:00am-8:00pm Monday-Friday)

Stop It Now! Georgia is a program of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia and is one site of the national Stop It Now! organization. Stop It Now! was founded in 1992 with the belief that adults can prevent child sexual abuse. Funding for this project comes through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PCA Georgia is a statewide private nonprofit organization dedicated to child abuse prevention and relies on community support and volunteers to assist in its effort to end child abuse in Georgia. For more information about Stop It Now! Georgia and PCA Georgia's services, resources and educational programs, please call 1-800-CHILDREN or go to www.stopitnowga.org.

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