

# Responding to Sibling Sexual Trauma (SST)

## Partnering with Parents

### *Supporting Parents Helps Kids*

Studies show that parental support is the primary factor influencing children's recovery from sexual abuse and from a history of harmful sexual behavior.

Social workers can help parents understand what has happened and be able to face it:

- Sibling sexual trauma (sibling sexual abuse) is common and can happen in any family
- Factors leading to SST include: historical trauma, exposure to online sexual content, sibling time together without adult presence, neurodiversity, delays in social skills, previous abuse of the child who harmed their sibling, exposure to domestic violence
- Children experience additional trauma when they are not believed or supported

### *Parents Need Help*

Parents undergo significant grief and trauma after learning of SST. Initial shock or denial is common. Parents can still come to believe and support their child. Facing a stigmatised, little-understood crisis, parents are at risk for social isolation, depression, and PTSD.

In the midst of this, they must:

- Navigate complex, unfamiliar systems
- Make crucial decisions
- Support children with greatly differing needs
- Manage logistics of housing, expenses, schedules

### *How Social Workers Can Help*

**Coordination between agencies is essential. Designate a primary manager to work with parents in addressing the big picture across services for the whole family.**

- Built trust; be honest & transparent
- Keep parents informed; explain processes, language, timelines
- Keep an open mind; every case is different, look for unique aspects of each one
- Value parents' knowledge of their children and family
- Listen to and validate difficult, conflicting emotions
- Minimize shame; educate parents, don't judge them, recognize their strengths

### *Have Referrals Ready*

Helping parents find needed services is a practical, crucial help. Helpful resources include:

- [stopitnow.org.au](http://stopitnow.org.au) (highly recommended helpline for parents, referrals on HSB treatment)
- [bravehearts.org.au](http://bravehearts.org.au) (child sexual abuse recovery services)
- [caraniche.com.au/youth-services](http://caraniche.com.au/youth-services) (help for young people in the youth justice system)
- **Peer support, such as these private online communities moderated by 5WAVES:**
  - Facebook: "Parents Coping with Sibling Sexual Trauma and Abuse"
  - Discord: SST/SSA Community; email [info@5WAVES.org](mailto:info@5WAVES.org) for invite



**MORE TOOLS & INFORMATION:**  
**[5waves.org](http://5waves.org) | [siblingsexualtrauma.com](http://siblingsexualtrauma.com)**

©2024 5WAVES, Inc., which grants permission to share or reprint this page unaltered in any quantity for free distribution.

