Part 1: Understanding Foster Care and Sexual Abuse Risks

1. Facts about Foster Care

Entering foster care can be a terrifying experience for children. They may not understand why they can’t live with their parents or they may think they are to blame. One of your jobs is to help them feel safe and secure while their parents solve their own problems. Along the way, you’ll experience the pride of knowing you helped a child during a time of desperate need.

What happened in the Lopezes’ house with Sally?

After you read the scenario, write down your thoughts on how you would have handled the situation if it had been your family with Sally.

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

☐ Anticipate how a foster child might feel
☐ Identify characteristics of foster children
☐ Understand more about abuse in foster care
2. The Risks of Sexual Abuse in Foster Care

There are three types of circumstances that could occur in your home:
- One child may sexually act out with another child.
- An adult may sexually abuse a child.
- A child might falsely accuse you or someone in your home of sexual abuse.

In 90% of cases, the molester is known by the child or the child’s family.

Dana and Max
How would you handle the situation between 11 year old Dana and 5 year old Max?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:
- Understand the risks foster children face
- List three circumstances that could occur in my home
Part 2: Reduce Sexual Abuse Risks

1. Know Your Foster Child and Establish Household Rules

There are five steps you can take to reduce the risk of sexual abuse:

1. Know your foster child and establish household rules
2. Supervise the children in your care
3. Control who has access to your children
4. Teach self-protection skills
5. Communicate regularly with your case worker

Discuss the child with your caseworker
What are some questions you can ask in order to get to know your child better?

What can you read to get to know more about your child?

What will this information tell you?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

- Understand the risks of sexual abuse in foster care
- List the 5 steps I can take to reduce the risk of sexual abuse
- Learn more about the child in my care through additional resources
2. Supervise the Children in Your Care

Foster children may need closer supervision than your own children, or children you know, because you don’t know much about your foster child. You'll need to keep a close eye on your foster child almost all the time, especially at the start.

What are five ways you can supervise the foster children in your care?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

☐ Understand that foster children may need different supervision
☐ List 5 ways to better supervise the children in my care
☐ Respond to warning signs

3. Control and monitor who has access to your children

You can keep your child safe by controlling who has access to her and by monitoring the interactions between your foster child and others.

You read a lot of scenarios in this section. Write down your feelings for two scenarios that moved you the most.

Scenario 1:

Scenario 2:

Why did these two scenarios stick out in your mind?
After completing this lesson, I am able to:

☐ Know why controlling access is important
☐ Understand why asking questions is important

4. Teaches Self-Protection Skills

Teach preschoolers and kindergartners three important things:
- The names of all their body parts.
- Rules about touching.
- What to do if someone tries to break the rules.

School-age children need to know:
- No one has the right to make them feel bad.
- To trust their intuition.
- How to recognize a bad secret.
- How to identify a trusted adult.

Preteens and Teens need to know:
- What kinds of situations should not be kept private.
- How to keep safe when communicating on the Internet.
- Teens need to understand boundaries.
- Dangerous adults will often violate your teen’s boundaries.
- What to do if someone tries to violate their boundaries.
- How to respond if they or one of their friends are being sexually abused.

List the five rules about touching:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
What should you teach your foster child to do if someone breaks the rules about touching?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

- Teach age appropriate protection
- List the rules about touching
- Describe what situations should not be private
- Understand Internet safety

5. Communicate Regularly with Your Caseworker

The more information you share, the better equipped your caseworker will be to answer your questions, advise you about how to handle situations you face with your foster child, and help you get the services your foster child needs.

Keep notes! Alert caseworker to urgent situations. Record as much information as you can about the situation and tell him/her:

- what happened
- who was involved
- what did each person say about what happened--in their own words
- how the child acted about the incident
- what you did

What should you expect during a home visit from your agency?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

- Understand why communicating is important
- Keep better notes during an urgent situation
- Know what to expect during a home visit
- Discuss what needs/issues I might have
Part 3: Preventing and Responding to Sexual Abuse Allegations in Foster Care

1. How to Prevent False Allegations of Abuse

A foster child may make an allegation out of anger, because of a misunderstanding, in an attempt to return home, or maybe for reasons that even the child doesn't understand.

There are five situations that can put you at higher risk for false allegations:
1. Physical contact
2. Bedtime and bath time
3. Conversations about sensitive topics
4. One-on-one situations
5. Conflicts and discipline

Notes:

Your foster child is not your own child. What are some things you can do with your child that you cannot do with your foster child?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

- Identify situations that put me at risk for false allegations
- Describe the difference in my actions with my child vs a foster child
- Establish household rules to protect myself and my foster child
2. How to Respond if an Incident or Allegation Occurs

The time may come when your foster child tells you that she has been sexually abused--or even that someone is sexually abusing her now. Telling someone this is very difficult for a child. Telling takes a lot of courage.

If you find yourself in this situation, follow these guidelines:

- Stay calm
- Make certain your foster child is not in danger
- Pay close attention to details
- Write down what you find out
- Contact your caseworker immediately

Paying close attention to detail is very important. What should you listen for?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Notes:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

☐ Respond to an incident or allegation
☐ List the guidelines that could help me during this situation
3. What to Expect If You are Accused of Abuse

If you are accused of abusing your foster child, the allegation will be investigated. Once the investigation is complete, decisions will be made regarding whether the child can or should remain in your care.

How should you expect to be treated during an investigation?

Who can you reach out to for support?

After completing this lesson, I am able to:

- Respond to an incident or allegation
- List the guidelines that could help me during this situation
- Know where to find support