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Press Release

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SPEAK TO YOUR CHILDREN

Renewed attention to the JonBenet case presents an opportunity for parents!

Many adults are discussing John Mark Karr and the death of JonBenet Ramsey; we should not be surprised if our kids are too. This presents an opportunity for parents to speak to their children about the myths and realities of child sexual abuse.

“Parents could consider casually asking their children what other kids are saying about JonBenet Ramsey --- they could start by asking if their children have ever heard her name and progress to asking if they know what happened,” said Dr. Janet Rosenzweig, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse – NJ. “The conversation should move into sharing the real information that is known, and clearing up any myths or misconceptions. Children who pick up snippets of information can fill in the blanks with details that may represent their own worst fears.”

If a child uses this opportunity to share their own fears, parents have a great opportunity to help lay them to rest. Parents should listen carefully and completely, not interrupting their child, and acknowledging the fear as being real to the child. A casual dismissal such as “that’s silly” may shame a child into silence and stop them from further sharing.

“This is an opportunity to remind children that most sex offenders are known to their victims” Rosenzweig said. A frank conversation about adults who make a child uncomfortable is always a good idea. “Most likely, the discomfort has nothing to do with sexual abuse, but the conversation opens the door for better communication between parents and children”. Parents can also remind their children that it is never OK to have a secret friend - parents should know who all of their children’s friends are.

Prevent Child Abuse - New Jersey is a statewide, non-profit organization founded in 1979. We are the New Jersey affiliate of Prevent Child Abuse America, a national coordinating body for chapters in 38 states. The mission of Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey is to lead statewide efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect, in all its forms, for all of New Jersey’s children. By establishing local partnerships, Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey builds communities, strengthens families and empowers parents through parenting programs, education and training, advocacy and public awareness activities.

For more information, contact Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey by calling 1-800-CHILDREN or visit the website at www.PreventChildAbuseNJ.org.

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