

# Mother concerned about grandmother's home's safety

**Yvette:**

I have a 3-year-old son. He does not have a relationship with his father, but his father's mom periodically spends time with him and her daughter's two children. The grandmother and her daughter are very close. They spend a lot of time together over at one another's homes and do pretty much everything together.

My concern is that I was told that my son's aunt (the daughter) is married to a man who molested young boys prior to their marriage.

I advised my son's grandmother, his father and his aunt that I do not want him anywhere near her husband. If he has a past of molesting children, I cannot allow my son be around this man in any capacity. This in turn affects my son's relationship with his family. His aunt and the husband remain married, and his grandmother has taken him over to their house several times. She asks to take my son on holidays, such as Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, as well as for her other grandchildren's birthdays.

The family is working through their issues, and, from my understanding, they attend church regularly and pray

about their problems. They seem to feel that as long as there are others around, I shouldn't have a problem with my son being around the husband.

I do not agree with this and have voiced my concerns many times. It is clear that I do not want my son around him, but I know when the grandmother takes my son, she oftentimes has my son over at her daughter's house and around her daughter's husband. I am considering not allowing her to get my son at all because my concerns have not been honored. What should I do? I do not think I am wrong for feeling this way, but my concerns about this man will eventually cause my son to lose touch with his other family.

A concerned mom

## **Dear concerned mom:**

You are absolutely correct to address this issue with the child's grandmother, and she should respect your feelings. I also recognize that this is a tough situation for you; you don't want your son to lose contact with his father's family. I suggest talking to the grandmother one more time. Explain that your son's safety is non-negotiable and that if she

wants to continue to be a part of his life, she needs to respect your wishes. You must be very direct: If you take him around the uncle, I am going to stop your visits. Offer to meet your son's cousins at a neutral or public location in order to maintain their connection. You must protect your son — regardless of how the family tries to convince you that the uncle is safe.

Yvette

## **'Raise Your Voice' — Risk being wrong to help a child**

While you're browsing the grocery aisle, you spot a 3-year-old girl sitting in the grocery cart's child seat. She turns and stares directly at you — but she doesn't smile. Then you notice her shirt's shocking message: Sexually abused.

This is the theme of Raise your Voice, a new public-service campaign of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Columbus Children's Hospital. Using a combination of print, radio and television public-service announcements, the

campaign is a reminder that, unlike the images in the ads, the signs of child abuse aren't always obvious. However, there are often signals of abuse from which some of us turn away or choose to ignore because we're uncertain or don't know how to take action.

This campaign places responsibility on our shoulders. The message is clear: Raise your voice by making a confidential call to Children's Services if you suspect a child is being abused.

If you're wrong, there's no harm done, but if you're right, you may save a child's life. Risk being wrong in order to help a child.

Educational resources are also available through the Center for Child and Family Advocacy Web site at [www.columbuschildadvocacy.com](http://www.columbuschildadvocacy.com).

Since studies reveal that the highest rates of child abuse occur during the holidays, the public service messages will begin in early December.



Yvette McGee Brown is a former Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court Judge. She is currently the president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Columbus Children's Hospital.