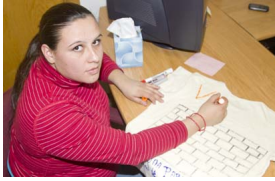


## DC abuse victim shares story of domestic violence in family

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Thursday, 28 April 2011 13:25 - Last Updated Thursday, 28 April 2011 13:28

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### Sister struggles with sexual assault which occurred at 5 years of age.

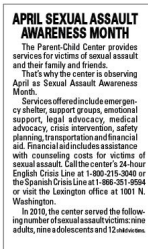
Juana still remembers the dark night her father shoved the end of a gun barrel against the head of her youngest sister.

“I told him that no one was going to harm my Mom and the kids anymore,” said Juana who was then in her teens and the oldest of five sisters. “We had no brothers so I was going to defend them.”

Through an interpreter at the Parent-Child Center in Lexington, the 25-year-old mother of three recalled the domestic violence once endured by the girls and women in her family.

Juana, who now lives in Lexington, learned two years ago that she couldn't protect Maria—her youngest sister—from another kind of harm.

Sexual assault.



The incident happened when Maria was 5 and the family was living in Guadalajara, Mexico.

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Maria didn't break her silence about the assault until nine years later.

"I feel bad I couldn't defend her," Juana said through tears.

The assault occurred when their

mother was working in a clothes factory. Typically, Juana and her sisters stayed home but sometimes visited their uncles who lived nearby.

Maria was sexually assaulted in an uncle's home but hasn't provided any more information about the incident or the perpetrator.

"My mom and sister think it's someone we know," Juana said.

Juana said Maria was unable to tell anyone about the assault until she was 14 because she was afraid their father would beat her.

Although Maria's behavior changed after the assault, Juana said the family didn't know why.

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