



PROTECT
M Y M I N I S T R Y

Child Safety

Course Overview

No organization wants to see sexual abuse of children take place under their care. When it happens, it causes great harm to the victims and the organization. Often, it's recognized and publicized, and receives attention from legislation at both the state and federal levels. Public declarations of abuse by adult survivors, including celebrities and sports figures, increase the media coverage. We, as a society, are awakening to the damage done to the victims when organizations unwittingly permit the child sexual abuse to occur. A report of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a trusted member of your program can result in legal action against the predator, supervisors, and leaders of the organization and, in the worst cases, the program could be forced to close altogether. This training is designed to help you recognize the signs of abuse as well as the characteristics of perpetrators. Our primary motivation is always to protect our children from immediate harm and a lifetime of anguish. By discussing and learning about child sexual abuse, you are taking a proactive stance in keeping children safe.

Our Child Safety Course consists of 7 lessons covering the following topics:

Lesson 1: Defining Child Sexual Abuse

Lesson 2: Victim Behavioral Characteristics

Lesson 3: Characteristics of Child Molesters

Lesson 4: Making a Difference

Lesson 5: Responsibility & Reporting

Lesson 6: Prevention

Lesson 7: Policies and Procedures

At the end of the training, a quiz will be presented to measure your understanding of this material. A minimum score of 70 percent is required, but we encourage you to learn as much as possible.

If, for any reason, your training is interrupted, you can click the link to begin again and forward through the lessons to where you left off. Some browsers will even bookmark your session taking you back to the beginning of the lesson where interrupted.

Let's begin.

Lesson 1: Defining Child Sexual Abuse

According to the National Sexual Violence Research Center¹ child sexual abuse definitions vary across disciplines, social systems, research efforts, and laws. There are many forms of child sexual abuse, including but not limited to rape, fondling, sexual assault, exposure, voyeurism, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Sometimes, child sexual abuse is considered a type of child maltreatment, which also includes physical and psychological abuse as well as forms of neglect.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention² identify two general categories of sexual abuse:

#1: physical contact (a sexual act or contact)

#2: non-contact (exploitation of sexual interaction)

Physical contact can include:

- Any contact or touching a child's private parts for sexual purposes
- Making a child touch someone else's genitals or play sexual games
- The contact of objects or body parts with a child in a sexual manner

Non-contact sexual abuse can include:

- Showing pornographic pictures, books, or movies to a child
- Deliberately exposing oneself to a child
- Photographing or videotaping a child in sexual poses
- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- Inappropriately watching a child undress or use the bathroom

While this training deals primarily with child sexual abuse, it is important to know that there are forms of child abuse other than physical and non-contact sexual abuse. Let's briefly look at Non-Sexual Abuse or Neglect:

- Child abuse is any intentional act by an adult or by another child that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical, mental, or emotional health. Abuse by another child can be an older or stronger individual who exerts his or her position of power.
- Neglect is another form of abuse that occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs like food, water, supervision, medical care, clothing, housing, or educational needs.
- Emotional abuse can occur when words or actions are used that cause extreme emotional pain, often with no visible injury.

Now, let's review some facts about child sexual abuse to help gain a better idea of the reality of the serious situation:

- According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there were over 678,000 victims of child abuse and neglect and over 47,000 unique cases of sexual abuse. 1,770 children died from their abuse³.
- Roughly 90% of child abuse cases involve someone they know and trust⁴.
- Juveniles who commit sex offenses against other children are more likely than adult sex offenders to offend in groups and at schools and to have more male victims and younger victims⁵.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that 1 out of every 417 persons in the U.S. is on the sex offender registry⁶.
- 42.2% of girls that experience their first completed rape do so before the age of 18⁷.

- 29.9% between 11-17 years old
- 12.3% are at or before age 10
- 1 in 7 girls and 1 in 25 boys will be sexually assaulted by the time they reach age 18⁸.
- Sexual abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, or socio-economic classes and is no respecter of any religious denomination or creed⁹.

While these statistics are based on in-depth studies by credible sources, it's difficult to get a 100% accurate view of the true numbers. The public is often not fully aware of the magnitude of the problem because only 38% of child victims disclose that they've been sexually abused¹⁰.

Lesson 2: Victim Behavioral Characteristics

Learning the behavioral characteristics of young victims is important in recognizing some of the warning signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can take place within a family, by a parent, step-parent, sibling or other relative; or outside the home, for example, by a friend, neighbor, or child care person.

The vast majority of people who work with children do so entirely for noble reasons. But in our training, be aware that the traits that may seem admirable to the community may also hide darker intentions. Our goal is to be able to recognize the difference.

Profile of Potential Victims

This list of risk factor traits is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is given as a list of examples that abusers often look for in victims.

- Most victims are under 14 years of age
- These children may be very friendly or shy or may exhibit isolation
- Many come from single parent/broken homes
- Parents may have alcohol and/or drug dependency or mental illness
- Parents may be emotionally unavailable, causing the child to seek guidance from other adults
- Parents may be physically absent due to work or divorce
- There may be a stepfather or mother's boyfriend living at home
- There may be pornography in the home or an excessive permissiveness, along with inadequate parental supervision

Physical Signs or Behaviors

Physical signs or behaviors may indicate a child is being sexually abused. Of course, some signs may be more obvious than others. All such physical signs should be investigated immediately.

- A child with torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- A child contracting a sexually-transmitted disease or experiencing pain, swelling, bleeding, discharge, or itching in the genital area
- Pregnancy is a physical sign of sexual abuse in a female child.
- Frequent or unexplained sore throats, stomachaches, headaches or urinary tract infections

Other signs are more subtle and difficult to recognize. Regressive behaviors that are not age appropriate such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, or fear of the dark can be a sign of sexual abuse.

Also, certain behaviors can be warning signs of mental distress caused by sexual abuse of a child. A disclosure of abuse by a victim is the most obvious sign of distress and only rarely are abuse disclosures by children not true.

Here are some other indications that a child may have been sexually abused:

- A child who avoids undressing or wears extra layers of clothing
- Not wanting to be left alone with previously trusted care-givers
- Exhibiting an unusual change in bathing or grooming practices
- A sudden drop in grades or lack of interest in school activities they were previously interested in
- Exhibiting adult-like sexual behavior and knowledge
- Role playing sexual activities with toys or other children
- Considering their body or self as dirty or repulsive
- Using new words for private body parts or drawing sexually-related images
- Having no desire to spend time with an adult or older peer who was previously known and well-liked
- Having nightmares, night terrors, exhibiting unusual aggression or is unable to control bowels
- Refusing to talk about secrets
- Sudden mood swings and a drastic change in eating habits
- Talking about a new adult friend and receiving frequent gifts from them

Child care-givers should be on the alert for signs of child abuse. While one sign of abuse may actually be innocent and signify another challenging life event such as the death of a family member or pet or parents going through a divorce, multiple or severe signs should always be investigated.

Discussing these warning signs with your supervisor is the indicated first step where there are multiple or severe signs of physical or mental distress.

Effects on the Victim

It is important to understand just how much of an impact sexual abuse has on a child. The effects of child sexual abuse will be both short- and long-term. Childhood victims withdraw and may become morose in the short-term. Later in life, victims can become plagued by mental distress that can become quite severe.

*Abusing a child sexually is not just a physical violation; **it is a violation of their trust.***

(RAINN, 2020)

Effects on the victim as a child may include the following:

- Prolonged sexual abuse usually causes the child to develop low self-esteem and an abnormal or distorted view of sex.
- The child may become distrustful of adults and can become suicidal.
- Children who are sexually abused have an increased risk of depression, suicide and drug problems.
- Abused children are 53% more likely to be arrested as juveniles, and 38% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime¹¹.

- By the time victims reach grade school, they are more prone to being easily distracted, lacking in self-control, and not well-liked by peers.

Some of the effects that may not be apparent until the child matures to adulthood include:

- Lasting impacts on mental stability and the ability to have healthy and happy relationships with family and members of the opposite sex.
- Some children may convince themselves it did not happen or regress the memory completely. Unfortunately, it is possible the victim will never fully realize throughout life that they had been victimized when young, leading to an unhealthy mental state.
- Many adults who were childhood victims are reluctant to seek treatment for their earlier sexual abuse.
- In the most severe circumstances, an abuse victim may become an abuser themselves. This type of victim has rationalized the normalcy of the abuse they have suffered and may see nothing wrong in the behavior in sexually abusing others.

What about the Victim's Family?

It is not uncommon for family members to experience rage, helplessness, or depression. They may express a desire to seek revenge. They are often very vocal about how sex offenders should be treated by the legal system. In some cases, their view of crime and suitable punishment is forever altered.

Spouses may unfairly begin to blame one another, perhaps because they are unable to direct their feelings to the real guilty party.

Some adult family members may experience outright denial, refusing to admit that one of their children could have been so easily victimized.

Lesson 3: Characteristics of Child Molesters

First of all, realize that molesters' motivations are never innocent. Children develop bonds and trust with strangers much more quickly than parents may be aware. Recognizing the behaviors of potential perpetrators will help you to take action in preventing child sexual abuse in your program.

Classes of child molesters

A child molester may be classified into one or more of three sub-groups.

1. Pedophiles

The first group comprises pedophiles. A pedophile is attracted to children sexually and receives gratification by their actions. They often seduce children with attention and gifts, a pattern called "grooming."

2. Sexual Aggressors

A second group contains sexual aggressors who desire to exercise power over the victim for some deep-seated psychological reasons. While this group is a minority, they are particularly dangerous because they are literally child rapists whose violence can make

the damage to the victim more lasting or perhaps even fatal.

3. Profiteers

The third group is people who profit from child pornography or child prostitution. While this group may also include members of the above, the primary motivation is financial. It is important to realize that there are a significant number of offenders that do not fit any one simple profile.

How do predators choose their victims?

A preferential offender generally has an age, sex, or body type of choice. They will choose recreational activities and work situations which place them near children within that age or sex of preference.

Many child molesters are very sensitive to the needs and desires of children. They may tend to choose children who feel “different” or “set apart” such as children who are shy, loners, from single parent homes, or needy.

Once a molester singles out a child as a potential victim, they will spend extra time and attention with that child exploring boundaries and gaining the child’s trust. This behavior is called “grooming.”

What are grooming behaviors?

Grooming is the process by which molesters often seduce children with attention and gifts.

In the beginning, the molester will groom the child they intend to victimize, showing special favor, friendship, buying gifts and even love. Later, the molester will use this friendship or relationship against the child to push sexual

boundaries, desensitizing the child to sexual objects and touching. Even if this behavior seems innocent or at least not directly indicative of guilt, the molester is preparing the child for sexual behavior.

More grooming behaviors sexual predators engage in, including the following:

- The predator may participate in kid activities and try to volunteer for unsupervised activities with one or more children.
- Many times, the abuser is well-liked and may work hard to win the trust of the child’s “gatekeepers,” such as parents, ministers, and coaches.
- Many times, the predator buys gifts for their victim such as toys or video games or perhaps forbidden items like liquor, beer, cigarettes or inappropriate pictures or videos.
- The predator may engage in electronic communications with their victim, continuing the pattern of desensitizing them to their sexual aggression.
- During nap time or when “babysitting,” the predator may fall asleep with the child or even go to sleep in the child’s bed. They will excuse this behavior as “comforting” the child when upset.
- When they believe they are not being supervised, they may exhibit inappropriate behavior with children. To avoid supervision, they might try to take the child to a remote area or otherwise look for opportunities to be alone with the child.
- In playtime or sporting environments, the abuser may engage in inappropriate rough-housing, butt slapping, or touching, and then treat it as a game or normal part of sports activity which are never acceptable behaviors.

A molester's reasons for grooming a child are never innocent. Any one of the behaviors we have been discussing alone may not indicate that a child is being groomed for sexual abuse. But some of these behaviors are inappropriate and should never occur. When one or more of these behaviors are seen, a problem may exist.

Common Characteristics and Behaviors of Male Molesters

Almost 95% of convicted sexual offenders are male. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020³, convicted male offenders have some common characteristics. A male molester needs power and control over his environment and people. A male molester may also:

- Move his residence more frequently than most people
- He may seem overqualified for the job or be willing to accept less than what his education and experience would warrant
- He may be willing to take the job as a voluntary position with no pay at all to gain access to children
- He may choose hobbies or activities that are appealing to children or allow him to be in the presence of children
- Many molesters are interested in photography or videotaping and they may play on the child's vanity to take pictures or video of an increasingly sexual nature
- He is not usually a "team player" and may seem to be an outcast or a rebel
- He may be easily frustrated and moved to outbursts of anger

Common Characteristics and Behaviors of Female Molesters

Now let's turn to the common characteristics of female child sexual abusers. At least 5% of perpetrators are known to be women. These female abusers prey on both male and female victims.

- A female sexual offender may be unemployed or underemployed
- She may have had marginal or poor performance in school
- Female sexual predators may have been raised in a strict home with little attention or tenderness from her father
- Or, it could have been a very religious home with a hypercritical or abusive father
- In extreme cases, she was sexually abused as a child herself
- She will lie to other adults to avoid conflict and may appear socially isolated, or a "loner"
- She is more likely to seduce than to coerce her victims, especially boys
- The female offender may also blame the child or claim that the child initiated the sexual behavior

Be on the lookout for unusual or unnecessary electronic communications between the female offender and her victims. Since many of her prey may be adolescent boys, she will look to impress them with her gadgets and technology.

Lesson 4: Make a Difference

The first step in any program's efforts to prevent child sexual abuse is to form a planning committee. They will be responsible for creating the organization's policies and procedures, so be sure you have familiarized yourself with them. Be aware that your organization will likely want to follow best practices in screening volunteers. No one should be excused from screening, even long serving volunteers or those seen as valuable assets in the community. Such screening procedures could include any and all of the following:

- A written application and interview
- A comprehensive background check
- Checking your references
- Checking your online social media profile

Warn Children

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children should be warned. In their publication "*Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*¹²," they spell out that children should be informed about child sexual abuse, including what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

The information they provide is mainly about self-protection. It also specifies children should be encouraged to report an incident of sexual abuse and how they should do so within the organization. It is important not to rely on merely warning children about "stranger danger".

Avoid False Allegations

Set limits in your physical and relational interactions. It is your responsibility to keep your boundaries very clear by avoiding discussions about details of your personal life.

Always avoid inappropriate or sexual word choices, unobserved one-on-one interactions, and keep children and students away from your personal space at home.

Never invite children under your care into your bedroom or bed, at home or away on sponsored activities.

Although it may seem innocent or hip, **do not engage in electronic communications with the youth or students with whom you work.**

Any report of such contact on your part can be misrepresented regardless of your intent or the content of the messages. And even messages that don't involve direct sexual contact are prosecutable.

Avoid unmonitored or unsupervised situations

No one in the organization should be exempt from observation and supervision. This includes long term trusted staff. The best way to prevent child sexual abuse is to make certain there is never an opportunity for it to occur. If your responsibilities require time alone with a child, stay in the areas designated for the specific activity, leave doors open whenever possible, and stay in plain sight of other personnel or volunteers.

Avoid opportunities for youth and adult staff to be nude and in proximity, such as after-activity showers or after swimming.

Watch for inappropriate physical contact or grooming behaviors

Acceptable forms of physical contact include hugs from the sides, high fives, or pats on the upper back. With smaller children, holding a hand is usually appropriate, especially in the context of keeping contact with the child to prevent an unsafe action.

Inappropriate rough-housing, butt slapping, or touching is not acceptable. Physical discipline or corporal punishment is also never appropriate.

Be on the lookout for any cases where a child seems to be the “mystery recipient” of gifts or cash with an unexplained source or any other similar “grooming” type behaviors by an adult or other youth member.

Lesson 5: Reporting

Over time, legislation has become more and more restrictive in the area of responsibility and reporting. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)¹³ requires each State to have provisions or procedures for requiring certain individuals to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect.

Almost all jurisdictions require child care-givers to report suspicion or incidents of child sexual abuse. In approximately 18 states, any person who suspects child abuse or neglect is required to report.

You cannot simply rely on children to report the abuse. Estimates show that fewer than 15% of all confirmed cases¹⁴ of child sexual abuse are ever reported.

Why is the number of reported cases so low?

- Children are often afraid to report sexual abuse out of fear they will not be believed, or even that they will be blamed for what happened.
- Often the victim loves and protects the predator. Some children feel “special” about the abuse.
- They may feel they are somewhat at fault or that people will believe they are at fault. Victims will also sometimes exhibit “Stockholm Syndrome” where they sympathize with their abuser.
- They may believe the predator when he or she claims it was only one incident and “will never happen again.”
- Witnesses may not trust their own instincts or falsely believe that no real harm was done.
- Children rarely report they are being abused.
- In some cases, the child may have participated in other activities they wish to keep secret such as drinking alcohol, smoking or other types of adult behavior.
- The perpetrator may also have played on the victim’s fears and feelings of guilt and convinced the child they should not tell anyone.

Even more disturbing, the perpetrator may try to convince the child his or her own arousal is evidence the child enjoyed it and should not report it because they will be blamed for such feelings. It is important for care-givers to always keep in mind that human bodies of any age will respond to sexual touch in

predictable ways. A physiological response in a child's body is never the fault of the child.

Know Your Organization's Policies

Guidelines about interactions between individuals should spell out clearly what will not be tolerated. Be sure you understand the behaviors that have been outlined to be appropriate, inappropriate, and potentially harmful to youth.

Always act on infractions of your organization's policies. The committee charged with defining policies and procedures should spell out that it is not the role of anyone within the organization to evaluate or investigate an allegation or suspicion of child sexual abuse. This is the appropriate role for child advocacy groups, child protective services, and law enforcement as defined by state law. Do not make exceptions based on a perception the intent was not harmful. It should be explicitly stated that, at a minimum, the head of your organization is professionally and legally accountable for ensuring that all cases of abuse are reported to the proper authorities.

What to Do if You Suspect Abuse

While it is not advised to conduct your own investigation, depending on circumstances, it may be appropriate to ask a few clarifying questions of the youth or the person making the allegation. This may prevent making a report when none is required.

Report to the authorities any time there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. This includes abuse by another volunteer or employee, a youth in the

organization or even someone outside the organization. Records of child sexual abuse should be kept indefinitely.

You should be aware that any direct interference in the evaluation or investigation could actually harm the youth or the legal investigation, jeopardizing the strength of a potential case.

Do not rely solely on waiting for children to come forward and report inappropriate sexual contact from adults. The pressure on the child to keep the secret may be immense. Be sensitive to the fact that the exposure of the abuse may be almost as traumatic to the child as the abuse itself.

Never promise to keep it secret when a child reports sexual abuse to you. In most states, any adult who becomes aware that a child may have suffered abuse is required by law to report the abuse to law enforcement officials.

If you suspect that a child is being abused, tell your supervisor. Your supervisor can either escalate the incident, perform further investigation or ask that it be done, and call and report the abuse to your state agency. If necessary, you can always call the national child abuse hotline yourself at 1-800-422-4453. Even if you are not certain child sexual abuse occurred, you may call without fear of repercussions when the report is made in good faith. Another thing to keep in mind: If your youth program involves travel with children to another state, you should learn what the reporting requirements are for the state where the group will be visiting. The laws of the state where the incident of abuse occurs will apply.

Lesson 6: Prevention

There are multiple aspects involved in creating a program for youth that not only allows them to participate in fun activities, but also enables them to develop trusting relationships with adults and other youth, while also keeping them safe.

Location of the organization, the activities and the age of the participants need to be considered. The guidelines provided in this training are not meant to be all inclusive and additional information is available in the resources provided at the end of this training. You should be sure your program meets all local, state and national laws and is reviewed by your legal counsel. The goal should always be to protect children and keep them safe from harm while allowing them to build relationships and participate in the activities you offer.

Planning Committee

Preparing a safe environment for kids starts with your planning committee.

Choose committee members from the organization, preferably ones who have been affiliated with the organization for a long time and those that share the organization's commitment to the group's goals and mission statement.

The committee should meet regularly to write/review and update your organization's policies as they relate to preventing child sexual abuse. Make sure all employees and volunteers that will have any interaction with children are familiar with these policies and agree to abide by them. The easier you can make it for them to navigate your policies and procedures, the more time they can focus on the youth in your program.

Screening Personnel

Screen all personnel that will have any interaction with children in your organization.

- **Interview**

Be sure to interview all prospective employees and volunteers. For assistance in creating open ended questions to be used in interviews, consult the CDC guide to Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth- serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures. A link to this pdf is provided at the end of this training. By asking open ended questions, you may elicit answers that indicate potential problems. In the interview, be sure to ask about interests, hobbies, and leisure time activities. Look for applicants who enjoy adult activities and relationships and beware of someone who can only relate to children. Let applicants know about your child sexual abuse prevention policies as this may discourage some applicants seeking a vulnerable environment. Make sure they understand their job description and the commitment involved as well as the policies and procedures they will be required to follow.

- **Check references**

Obtain references for applicants that will be working with youth. Those references should be able to verify employment or volunteer history. Do not limit references to family and friends and obtain verbal, not just written, references for applicants. Ask references specific questions about how the applicant interacts with youth and probe on past history with youths in their organization.

- **Background Checks**

Background checks are an integral part of any program. It is best to screen your applicants and volunteers first to be sure they meet the needs of your organization before investing in their background check report. Background checks will identify anyone that has been convicted of a sexual offense and their criminal history, but remember that many who abuse children may not have been discovered by authorities.

Be sure the type of background check you are ordering is the most appropriate one for your location. If you need advice on the type of screening needed for your specific location, please consult with the background screening company who can update you on the best practices and latest guidelines for your county or state. County courts do not all report the same so multiple searches may be needed. For example, if an applicant has moved frequently, checks in multiple states may be necessary. Many background check companies can also offer social media screening and the ability to provide ongoing arrest monitoring. Be sure to obtain written consent before ordering the background check report. All completed reports must be kept confidential and secure. (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/PreventingChildSexualAbuse-a.pdf>) pg 7

Provide training

Require all individuals within your organization to receive training. Organizations should view this training as an essential component of their operations and state clearly the time frame for completion of this training.

- Ensure individuals have completed the training and understand the concepts. And repeat training as the need arises to reinforce the message. Policies should state the types of training, frequency, and methods to be used. Content should be clear and concise. The contents of the training program you are currently taking are typical of the type of material that should be covered.
- In addition, clear policies should be established for training caregivers (that is, parents or guardians), and the young members themselves. Youth should be educated about how they can keep themselves and others safe.

Monitor the environment

Ensure your policies have clear guidelines for safety. Each staff member and volunteer play a role in creating a safe experience for children and students in their care. Different strategies are appropriate for different types of environments. A camp environment, with many remote or concealed areas, requires more stringent guidelines on the visibility of participants. Doors should have windows in most rooms, with bright lighting to discourage intimacy. Privacy should be enforced for activities such as showering or changing clothes. Restricting access to isolated areas should be communicated and enforced. Transportation and off-site activity guidelines should be specified.

If activities are to be monitored with video cameras, provide the infrastructure to ensure that the implicit promise of security is upheld. Do not use “dummy” cameras hoping to discourage infractions.

For those activities that are away from home, monitor sleeping arrangements

carefully. Understand and follow your policies regarding sleeping arrangements while on overnight trips, lock-ins, camping trips, ski trips, or weekend camps. Do not lie down or allow others to lie down with a child in a child's bed at any time for any reason. Young children should not share a bed, blanket, or sleeping bag with any unrelated staff member, volunteer, or other child. All children of any age should wear pajamas to bed, both top and bottom during overnight events.

If programming for older students uses hotel bedding arrangements, understand and enforce your organization's policy concerning proper oversight and supervision of students and staff while sleeping.

Supervise Everyone

No one in the organization should be exempt from observation and supervision. They should understand the need for these measures and if there is resistance, appropriate action should be taken. There is simply no room for exceptions to the rules or special circumstances because someone is, in their mind, "important" or "too valuable to expose". This type of thinking can lead to serious consequences in the future. Make sure there are no opportunities for one-on-one situations between adults and children.

Adults should never be undressed in the presence of an unrelated child or teen. A child other than your own should never be undressed in your presence for any reason. Some activities may call for partial or complete nudity such as children taking a shower, swimming, changing into swimsuits or using the bathroom. These activities create a high risk of inappropriate touch from an adult or another child. Be on the lookout for individuals being in proximity to view or secretly spy on such activities.

In areas that involve water, carefully monitor the children or teens in your care. This includes the possibility of hiding contact under the surface of the water or in changing areas. Older children or students should be monitored while accommodating modesty by standing immediately outside the changing area within hearing distance and waiting for them. Do not allow children or students in your care to linger within the changing area.

In any situation where you are supervising children or students during activities, do not get distracted from your task. Be alert and make sure that you know the activity, location, or specific children or students you are responsible for supervising.

Watch for Grooming Behaviors

Be alert for grooming behaviors on the part of adult staff or volunteers working with children in the organization. Child molesters groom a child to whom they are attracted, usually choosing a child of their sexual preference or a specific type they target. Molester's grooming processes push physical boundaries and can lead to inappropriate touching. Staff and volunteers should never wrestle or engage in horseplay with children or teens. Unless it is a sanctioned sporting event, these activities should be redirected to other types of physical activity with less physical contact. This is especially true when the participants are engaging in activities that require some form of non-public apparel such as that used in swimming or camping. Child molesters will also groom a child by permitting adult-like privileges or activities which can later be used to threaten the child from disclosing abuse, such as alcohol, cigarettes, and other tobacco products. A child molester will use these and other things

to appear “cool.” They may also use these illicit activities on the part of the child as the basis for enforcing the secret. They may also initiate secret electronic messaging with his victim, so be on guard for signs that this type of communication is occurring.

If you see any adult or older child giving gifts or special privileges, using adult sexual language, or participating in activities that indicate grooming behavior, or communicating secretly using electronic methods, you must speak to your supervisor and report the behavior. If you see behavior that might suggest inappropriate relational boundaries between a child and a staff member or volunteer, you must speak to your supervisor and report the behavior. Reporting inappropriate behavior should not be feared. It is your responsibility.

Manage Change

As in most organizations, individuals may resist efforts to develop policies, procedures, and training programs. Generally, these objections are based on the belief that “it can’t happen here.” There may also be reluctance to even talk about the subject because of the sensitive nature. It is important that those in leadership positions positively reinforce the organization’s commitment to preventing child sexual abuse. This “buy-in” will help convince others in the organization that these programs are necessary and beneficial to the organization and the children who participate.

Lesson 7: Policies and Procedures

Defining Policies

As discussed previously, it is often difficult to find the balance between being vigilant and protective of youth and being so hyper-vigilant that the positive aspects of programs (for example, relationships between adults and youth) are lost. The need for this balance involves recognizing the fine line between overreacting and under-reacting. By developing clear policies, your organization can be prepared if a reportable infraction occurs. There are numerous sources and publications that can assist you in creating your policies and procedures. Please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/PreventingChildSexualAbuse-a.pdf> for additional information beyond what has been shared here with you.

Keep in mind that your policies and procedures will depend on multiple factors:

- Your organization’s mission and youth activities
- Insurance requirements
- Advice of legal counsel and state and federal laws
- Available resources

You will need to develop policies for different situations and be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately if any of the following occur:

- Inappropriate or harmful behavior
- Infractions of child sexual abuse prevention policies
- Evidence or allegations of child sexual abuse

Even though our goal is to prevent all these types of occurrences, your organization should communicate clearly with all staff and volunteers the procedures should an event occur.

Getting started

1. Define appropriate, inappropriate, and harmful behavior. For example, it is acceptable or appropriate to pat another person on the back or shoulder or give high fives but it is not appropriate to pat someone on the buttocks, practice corporal punishment, show pornographic pictures to anyone in the organization or have romantic or intimate contact with a youth member

2. How to Respond: Decide and define what behaviors your organization will address internally and what behaviors require reporting to the authorities.

Consider the following two examples. Suppose someone tells a sexually risqué joke to another person in the organization. Your policy for internal reporting may specify that this type of infraction includes:

- a. informing a direct-line supervisor or the youth's caregiver
- b. providing the youth with guidance, redirection, and instruction
- c. and file an incident report

However, if an employee/volunteer forces sexual contact with a youth, this violation would always be reported to the appropriate authorities according to the procedures outlined in your policy. Develop contacts in law enforcement, child protective services and advocacy

centers before any allegations arise. This will help ensure your policies are in line with the law.

3. Define how you will act on infractions of your organization's child sexual abuse prevention policy. If an employee or volunteer has breached a policy, such as texting inappropriately with a youth, your organization must still take action, even when child sexual abuse is not suspected. The consequences of violating policies should be explicit and violations should be addressed immediately. However, if abuse is suspected, it should also be reported to authorities immediately. Always act on infractions. Do not make exceptions based on a perception the intent was not harmful. It is difficult to make such judgment calls in the emotional aftermath of an incident. Always seek outside guidance.

Report when a staffer or volunteer witnesses or learns about sexual abuse of youth by another staffer or volunteer, another youth within the organization, or someone outside the organization, such as a caregiver.

4. Tailor strategies and policies for each type of child sexual abuse and identify to whom these reports are made. In most states, for example, caretaker abuse is always reported to child protective services. Local law enforcement is responsible for abuse by all other individuals. Responsibility can vary by state, so consult experts such as those in your nearest child advocacy center, your state sexual violence coalition, or your local rape crisis center in order to incorporate state guidelines into your policies.

5. Keep internal records of all incidents.

All individuals involved must be included in this report to ensure the line of responsibility is easily identifiable. Any resolution should be spelled out and kept updated as events unfold. Make sure any forms or procedures are kept up-to-date and include enough detail to enable reconstruction of the incident later if required.

6. Consider confidentiality in policy-making.

Decide in advance of a negative event what to keep private and what can be made public according to state legal requirements which will likely dictate such matters. Determine how your organization will respond to the press, the organization, and the larger community. Designate a spokesperson trained on how to deal with the press and public, if appropriate.

7. Determine what actions your organization will take when allegations are made but guilt is not yet established.

Will the person be suspended from working with youth? Will organization membership be revoked? Youth programs may have processes for dealing with such circumstances that are aimed more at rehabilitation than punishment. However, all organizations must remember to comply with the laws and act in the interest of protecting their youngest and most vulnerable members.

Defining Your Reporting Process

If evidence of child sexual abuse has surfaced or an allegation has been made, a formal report must be made to an outside agency.

Reporting always involves different levels of response depending on the situation. Your policies and procedures should spell out how each level of infraction will be addressed. For example, you might divide your responses into those instances where there was no physical contact and those that did have physical contact. In addition, you might spell out the types of contact and how each will be handled when they occur.

You should also consider which infractions will be reported internally, to supervisors, and which ones warrant immediate reporting to the appropriate governmental agency. Obviously, more harmful infractions should be reported both inside and outside the organization.

Who Must Report

First, let's consider who in the organization must make such reports. Depending on your state laws, you may have mandatory reporters in the organization. Given their role, state laws dictate that they must report abuse.

Today, in every state, persons in "helping professions" such as teachers, doctors, counselors, police officers, social workers, or health professionals are required to report suspicions of abuse to authorities. The primary concern of any adult should be to protect the child from further abuse and stop possible abuse of other children. If you are unsure on how to report or what should be reported, ask your supervisor.

For questions about mandatory reporters in your state, go to this website: [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau](https://www.hhs.gov/children-families/childrens-bureau/)

Other employees or volunteers should also make reports if they are state designated mandatory reporters or if your organization requires that they report suspicions of child sexual abuse and neglect. Alternatively, if not required by state law, your policies and procedures could define the internal reporting structure—for example, the employee or volunteer who must report suspicions of child abuse and neglect to another individual in the organization who is then required by law to report it.

New laws in many states are being updated to include not only the professional responsibility to report child sexual abuse, but *any* adult who has a suspicion that a child is being abused. This means basically there is no excuse for not reporting your evidence or suspicions. You should report all such cases to law enforcement or child protective services. It is important that you understand what is required in your state. Contact the office that handles abuse reports in your state or ask your local law enforcement agency. Also, a list of state agencies is maintained on this website.

To Whom To Report

Second, decide in advance to whom reports are to be submitted. Your policies and procedures should have clear guidelines about how and when to report allegations and suspicions to authorities. These allegations and suspicions should be reported to very few people inside the organization before authorities are contacted. This allows the organization to minimize the process of describing the allegations over and over again for the child reporter, which in itself is very stressful.

It should be explicitly stated that, at a minimum, the head of your organization is professionally and legally accountable for ensuring that all cases of abuse are reported to the proper authorities. This “buck stops here” provision will help protect your organization from accusations the leadership was kept in the dark about instances of abuse.

Define specifically which external authorities, child protective services or law enforcement, should be contacted in different types of abuse cases. In Texas, for example, there are strict reporting requirements. If a person, including any member of camp staff, a camp counselor, or camp director has cause to believe that a minor has been or may have been abused or neglected at a youth camp, then that person shall immediately make a report to one of the following agencies:

- any local or state law enforcement agency
- the Department of Family and Protective Services Abuse Hotline, which may be contacted at (800) 252-5400 or through the secure web site <http://www.txabusehotline.org/>

Notification Requirement

In Texas, a person making a report, to local law enforcement or the Department of Family and Protective Services, of alleged abuse or neglect at a youth camp, must also notify the Department of State Health Services’ Policy, Standards and Quality Assurance Unit by phone at (512) 834-6788, by fax at (512) 834-6707, or by email at PHSCPS@dshs.texas.gov

If you suspect that a child is being abused, tell your supervisor. Your supervisor can either escalate the incident, perform further investigation or ask that it be done, and call and report the abuse to your state agency.

If necessary, you can always call the national child abuse hotline yourself at 1-800-422-4453. Even if you are not certain child sexual abuse occurred, you may call without fear of repercussions when the report is made in good faith.

Another thing to keep in mind: If your youth activity involves travel with children to another state, you should learn what the reporting requirements are for the state where the group will be visiting. It is your responsibility to ensure all staffers are aware of these reporting guidelines. To help you find requirements for different states, refer to the link on the [Childwelfare.gov](https://www.childwelfare.gov) website. This connects you to a list of links to each respective state office. This is a good place to look because it is frequently updated as the state agencies provide new information to the U.S. government.

When to report

Report to the authorities any time there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. You should act immediately when you receive evidence or suspicions in the following cases:

1. inappropriate or harmful behavior
2. infractions of organizational child sexual abuse prevention policies
3. evidence, allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse

It is important to clarify what the expected response is to be. The committee charged with defining policies and procedures should clarify that it is not the role of any one individual within the organization to evaluate or investigate an allegation or suspicion of child sexual abuse. You may ask, exactly what is reasonable suspicion? In documenting your

policies and procedures, you should consult child protective services, law enforcement, or a child advocacy center to ensure your organization is defining reasonable suspicion appropriately according to guidelines in your state laws.

Obtain the help of a child advocacy center in deciding if reporting an allegation is appropriate because these centers work with law enforcement, social workers, lawyers, and mental health professionals.

While it is not advised to conduct your own investigation, depending on circumstances, it may be appropriate to ask a few clarifying questions of the youth or the person making the allegation. This may prevent making a report when none is required. Asking clarifying questions can prevent reporting a non-reportable event.

Do not rely solely on children to come forward and report inappropriate sexual contact from adults. As we have mentioned in the previous lessons, these reports can be unreliable or not forthcoming at all. For many reasons, children often do not report they are being abused, regardless of how miserable it is making them.

We have already discussed the reasons children are unlikely to report abuse.

Keep these factors in mind when reporting internally or to authorities. The pressure on the child to keep the secret may be immense. Be sensitive to the fact that the exposure of the abuse may be almost as traumatic to the child as the abuse itself. Professional counseling is almost always warranted.

The child may share only a part of their experience to see how their words will be received by another person, particularly

an adult. Others may go ahead and tell you about abuse but may ask you to keep it secret from others. Never agree to keep sexual abuse a secret. Never promise not to tell when a child reports sexual abuse to you. In most states, by law, you cannot keep this promise. In most states, any adult who becomes aware that a child may have suffered abuse is required by law to report the abuse to law enforcement officials.

Record Keeping

It may be appropriate to keep records of your internal reporting of incidents where reporting is considered. Even though your organization should not investigate allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse instead of reporting them, it should develop a system to track such allegations and suspicions.

It is advisable to put a policy and procedure in place to define how injury reports are to be handled internally. Include child sexual abuse as a category on general incident reporting forms. These forms should be completed by the employee or volunteer who first learns of the abuse.

After the initial report, a supervisor of the staffer or volunteer should review the form. Refer child sexual abuse reports to a higher-level individual in the organization, preferably a trained investigator. This individual should do an incident review after each allegation to determine how a similar scenario can be prevented in the future. For example, if supervision of children and adult volunteers is inadequate, policies should change to enhance coverage.

Record the resolutions of all child sexual abuse cases. These forms should be kept indefinitely after resolution.

Conclusion

As we have learned in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse training, you have an important and very effective role in ensuring the children under the temporary care of your organization are protected. All of the horrible negative effects we have studied, all of the impacts to children, families, and the organization—all of them can be avoided if you take that role seriously and ensure the principles and practices you have learned are put into practice. You and your organization can make a very real and positive difference in the lives of the children who participate!

To ensure your understanding of this training, take the final exam. Once you start the exam, answer all questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to review the training content and take notes to help you retain this vital information.

After you successfully pass the exam, you will have an option to download and save or print your “Certificate of Completion.”

Thank you for participating and good luck!

Bibliography

For further research, we recommend reviewing the following sources we used to create the Child Safety Training Course.

1. [National Sexual Violence Research Center](#)
2. [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
3. [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020](#)
4. [Crimes Against Children Research Center, Childhood Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet](#)
5. [U.S. Department of Justice, Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors](#)
6. [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#)
7. [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey Summary Report](#)
8. [A Review of Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence Studies](#)
9. [Child Sexual Abuse. Department of Mental Health, John Hopkins University. Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents](#)
10. [Darkness to Light: Child Sexual Abuse Statistics](#)
11. [Early Physical Abuse and Later Violent Delinquency: A Prospective Longitudinal Study](#)
12. [Preventing Child Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures](#)
13. [The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act \(CAPTA\)](#)
14. [Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse](#)