

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa Child-Focused Sexual Abuse Prevention Programming Best Practices



Based on a review of best practices identified in the research literature, the Governors Advisory Council for the Child Abuse Prevention Program has adopted the following list of key elements to include in sexual abuse prevention programs whose primary focus is the instruction of children. Councils applying for Iowa Child Abuse Prevention grants for child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs should follow these best practice guidelines.

Topics to Address

Child-focused sexual abuse prevention presentations should incorporate a range of topics and approaches, including:

- define sexual abuse
- identify sexual abuse perpetrators, including abuse by relatives, close family friends, and others known to the family
- describe range of sexually abusive behaviors, including good, confusing, and bad/problem/unsafe touches
- emphasize that sexual abuse is never the child's fault

Skills to Develop

Sessions should cover not only specific information regarding sexual abuse but also help children develop skills to protect themselves in a variety of situations.

- assertiveness
- communication
- problem-solving
- saying no
- getting away to a safe place when threatened
- screaming and yelling to attract attention when threatened
- telling an adult who can help

Format/Structure of Sessions

These key design issues should be considered when developing a child-focused sexual abuse prevention program.

- customize presentations to match children's age, developmental level, education, culture, and cognitive level
 - when working with younger children, teach concrete, specific concepts and avoid abstract concepts
- use behavioral skills training format: instruction, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback
- present information in a variety of ways that engage children
- schedule multiple sessions in a year to repeat the information and offer more opportunities for practice
- schedule programs for multiple years to reinforce knowledge and skill building

Child Care Center/Preschool/School Involvement

The sponsoring organization's role should also include the following elements.

- integrate sessions into regular programming

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- involve teachers, care providers, and other personnel because they have access to children, know the children best, and understand child development
 - ways to involve teachers, care providers, and other personnel include using them as co-presenters, having them stay in the room during presentations, and having them review the information with the children later in the year

Family Involvement

Child-focused sexual abuse prevention programs should include adult family members in designing, implementing, participating, and/or evaluating the program. Programs should also provide adult family members with information to help them understand and respond to child sexual abuse.

- ways to involve adult family members
 - create an advisory committee for program development, implementation and evaluation and include adult family members
 - share information with adult family members about sexual abuse prevention curriculum/class activities
 - encourage adult family members to review distributed materials and practice new skills with children
- information to offer adult family members
 - myths and facts about child sexual abuse
 - behavioral and physical indications that a child may have been sexually abused
 - prevention activities families can do at home
 - how to appropriately respond to child's disclosure of abuse
 - how to report sexual abuse
 - community resources, including prevention, intervention, treatment, and support resources

Sexual Abuse Disclosures

To ensure appropriate support for a child who discloses abuse, the following key elements need to be implemented.

- programs need to develop an action plan for teachers, care providers, other personnel, presenters, and adult family members to respond to disclosures
- plans should include information on child protection issues, mandatory reporting requirements, and local resources for treatment and support

Program Assessment

The following identifies key elements to incorporate when developing and implementing the program assessment process.

- assess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioral change of students
- assess the attitude and satisfaction of teachers, care providers, other personnel, and adult family members
- document the number of disclosures after each session