Preventing Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse

www.villagecounselingcenter.net
What are we talking about?

Children who engage in sexual behaviors that:

- are not ordinary for their age.
- hurtful to themselves and/or others.
- elicit adult concern.
- result from trauma, anxiety or abuse.

Children who show normal sexual behavior or exploration associated with expected development are **NOT** considered to be acting out.
CHILD-ON-CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

• Is estimated that nearly half of all child molestations are committed by children and adolescents.

• Between 30 and 50% of sexual abuse cases are perpetrated by juveniles.
CHILD-ON-CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

• Several thousand child-on-child sexual abuse incidents occur in Florida every year although most are not reported.

• Treatment of both victims and abusers - greatly reduces the cycle of sexual abuse.

• Studies of very young children with sexual behavior problems - 49% to 80% have been sexually victimized.
Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

VS. SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Children with problematic sexual behavior are significantly different from adolescent/adult sex offenders.
Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

VS. SEXUAL OFFENDERS

• Although little research on recidivism by youth, the studies that have been done suggest recidivism rates are quite low. (e.g., only 4 percent of youth arrested for a sex crime recidivated).

• Less than 10 percent of adults who commit sex offenses had been juvenile sex offenders.
BASIC PREVENTION MODEL
(refer to handout)

1. Primary Level:
   Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

2. Secondary Level:
   Teaching children and adults how to avoid future abuse

3. Tertiary Level:
   Stopping the abuse from continuing
Primary Level: Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

“Teaching children how to swim”
Primary Level:
Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

• Parent Education Programs
Primary Level: Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

• Probably one of the most critical factors in child sexual development is the level of parental guidance. (e.g., family values)

• When parents view sex as dirty, inappropriate, or secretive they may set rigid and restrictive limits on self-exploration, language, questions, or curiosity considered healthy in children.

• When children are punished, chastised, or humiliated for their sexuality, they may associate sex with shame or guilt.
Primary Level:
Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

Sex Education Programs
(School & Community Levels)
Primary Level:
Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

- Increased Prevention Funding
- Improved Research
- Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs
Why no national campaigns?
Primary Level:
Preventing sexual abuse before it occurs

- Legal & Political Interventions
- Crisis Intervention Programs
Secondary Level:
Teaching children and adults how to avoid future abuse

“Helping children who can not learn to swim, who are drowning or who are being carried down stream”
Secondary Level:
Teaching children and adults how to avoid future abuse

- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs
- Sexual Abuser Treatment Programs
- In-Home Assessment & Interventions
Community Efforts & Advocacy Programs
Tertiary Level:
Stopping the abuse from continuing

“Rescuing children who are drowning or before they go down the waterfall.”
Tertiary Level: Stopping the abuse from continuing

- Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Programs
- Intensive Outpatient and Inpatient Treatment Programs
- Interagency Collaboration
Tertiary Level:
Stopping the abuse from continuing

- EFFECTIVE Community Supervision for Offenders

ADAM WALSH ACT ??????????????
Tertiary Level:
Stopping the abuse from continuing

- Pre-Sentence Alternative/Diversion Programs
- Juvenile Sexual Abuser Treatment Programs
- Treatment for Child Victims
Suspect Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse?

1. Act Fast.
2. Stay Calm.
5. Professional Help.
Three (3) Goals: Children with Sexual Behavioral Problems

1. Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety
2. Intervene When a Child is Acting Out Sexually or Inappropriately (not within normal developmental limits)
3. Promote Healing and Correction through Therapy and Education
GOAL 1:
Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety
and Promote Safety

SUPERVISION

- *Intensive supervision is a must!*
- Especially with younger or more vulnerable children.
- Require a higher level of supervision compared to most children.
GOAL 1:
Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

- Monitor TV, Video Games & Internet Use
- “Study” Interactions
- R, R & R – Respect, Rules & Responsibility
- Reliable & Safe Childcare
- Listen & Talk
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

PERSONAL TOUCH & BOUNDARY RULES

- Ask permission.
- Intervene with uncomfortable or hurtful touching.
- Teach children about good, nurturing touch
GOAL 1:
Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

PERSONAL TOUCH & BOUNDARY RULES

• Set limits for children that need or pursue constant touch or contact.
• Allow children to say “no” to touching.
• Give appropriate physical contact but also teach children to respect boundaries and personal space.
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

SEXUAL TALK

• Monitor between children.
• Talk openly, in a developmentally appropriate and respectful way.
• Eliminate exposure to sexually stimulating materials.
• Talk to children and teach them what is appropriate.
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

PRIVACY

- Teach the importance of boundaries and the right to privacy.
- Allow private spots, drawer and/or diaries/journals.
- Search drawers or read diaries with permission and in youth’s presence.
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

AT HOME

• Own bed & own room is ideal.
• Care when tucking children in at night (Male vs. female, closeness).
• Leave lights and doors open.
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

AT HOME

• Three (3) children to a room better than two?

• Proper clothing at all times, for all family members.

• Knock on doors and wait for permission.
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

HORSEPLAY

- Reduce or eliminate excessive & inappropriate horseplay such as tickling (coercive) or wrestling (starting point for intimate behaviors, causes anxiety, guise to sexually touch other children).
GOAL 1: Create Environments that Reduce Anxiety and Promote Safety

PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

• Do not use physical punishment.
• Do not use punishment that is cruel or humiliating.
GOAL 2: Intervene When a Child is Acting Out Sexually or Inappropriately

1. Develop, write & role play SAFETY PLANS

2. Establish specific ‘House Rules’ regarding touching

The House Rules
1. If you open it, close it.
2. If you turn it on, turn it off.
3. If you unlock it, lock it.
4. If you break it, repair it.
5. If you can’t fix it, call in someone who can.
6. If you borrow it, return it.
7. If you use it, take care of it.
8. If you make a mess, clean it up.
9. If you move it, put it back.
10. If it belongs to somebody else and you want to use it, ask.
11. If you don’t know how to operate it, leave it alone.
12. If it doesn’t concern you, don’t mess with it.
GOAL 2: Intervene When a Child is Acting Out Sexually or Inappropriately

3. Teach the child and all family members about ‘House Rules’

4. Intervene and confront child’s sexually acting behavior

For example, follow the 4-Step Rule:
1. Stop the behavior
2. Define the behavior
3. State the house rule
4. Enforce consequences or redirect the child.
GOAL 3: Promote Healing and Correction through Therapy and Education

THERAPY & COUNSELING

• Very helpful to any child who has suffered abuse or neglect.

• Address the child within the context of family relationships and should involve the children’s caregivers (e.g., foster family).

• Especially helpful for children who have an established pattern of sexually acting out or sexual aggressiveness.

• Should focus on boundaries.

• Does not “fix” a child. Is not a cure all.
GOAL 3: Promote Healing and Correction through Therapy and Education

- Treatment outcomes – Most show lower sexual behavior problems after short-term outpatient treatment (12-32 weeks).
- Recidivism rates for children 6-12 years old – 15% two years after treatment.
GOAL 3: Promote Healing and Correction through Therapy and Education

EDUCATION

• Good Touch, Bad Touch and Secret Touching.
• Help him/her focus on the difference between good touching, bad touching and secret touching.
• Provide prevention education.
• Provide regular sexuality education.
GOAL 3: Promote Healing and Correction through Therapy and Education

THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

• Getting the child to and from appointments.
• Maintain communication with the therapist.
• Respect the privacy of the session.
• Avoid playing therapist. The therapist’s role is to open the wounds and help a child deal with them.
Other Important Prevention Efforts

- Specialized, intensive training for child welfare agencies, foster parents, judges, attorneys, legal guardians, teachers, guidance counselors, school personnel, etc.
- Specialized social service staff with reduced caseloads
- Contracted providers for sexual abuse treatment and consultation
- Prevention and treatment services for sexually abused children