



It's time ... to talk about it! Talk early, talk often. Prevent sexual violence.

Tips for partnering with youth-serving organizations

Children often spend a great deal of time outside the home involved in athletic teams, camps, faith-based groups, and clubs. For this reason, youth-serving organizations play a pivotal role in keeping kids safe and creating respectful, healthy spaces for children and teens. This sheet offers suggestions for sexual assault centers to partner with youth-serving organizations to prevent child sexual abuse. These recommendations can also be used by youth-serving organizations in their efforts to support the development of healthy, safe, and happy children and teens.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is a broad term and includes rape, incest, child sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism.

Sexual violence occurs when someone is forced or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. Reasons someone might not consent include fear, age, illness, disability, and/or influence of alcohol or other drugs. Anyone can experience sexual violence, including children, teens, adults, and elders.

These crimes are widespread and occur daily in our communities, schools, and workplaces, but sexual violence can be prevented. Community members can work to prevent sexual violence by establishing healthy and positive relationships that are based on respect, safety, and equality.

Sexual violence at a glance

- One in six boys and one in four girls will experience a sexual assault before the age 18 (Dube et al., 2005).

- Of women surveyed in a national study, 12.3% experienced the first completed rape when they were age 10 or younger (Black et al., 2011).
- More than 25% of male victims in a national sample reported their first rape was when they were 10 years of age or younger (Black et al., 2011).
- Although studies have found girls to be three times more often than boys to be abused, boys are more likely to die or be seriously injured as a result of abuse (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996).
- Children are most often sexually abused by people they know. Law enforcement has found family members were perpetrators in 34% of reports (Snyder, 2000).

Getting Started

To begin, make a list of the groups and organizations in your community that serve youth. This list might include faith-based youth groups, Big Brothers Big Sisters, youth theater



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organizations, the YMCA/YWCA, and your local library system. Think big; children have an opportunity every day to come into contact with safe, supportive adults who can play a role in creating a healthy community.

Education as the first step

Approach the leaders of these groups with a specific request, such as giving a workshop to adult volunteers about the role that they play in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. Give the group simple, tangible information, like signs that an adult is violating boundaries with a child and how they, as a safe adult, can intervene. You may want to prepare a brief handout so that they can refer back to the warning signs at a later date.

Be prepared for the participants to share their own experiences or knowledge of child sexual abuse. Do your best to focus on how people can use their own experiences to help others, especially children, and refer participants to supportive resources in the community if they are in need of further assistance.

Along with educating the adults in youth-serving organizations, get the youth involved. Youth involvement is a powerful way for children and teens to help in their own way and make a difference. Draw on their talents and creativity and allow them to brainstorm their own unique ideas for raising awareness and preventing child sexual abuse.

Once you begin these partnerships, keep them involved in your work. Youth-serving organizations may want to help with a fundraiser, wear teal bracelets, volunteer at an awareness event or participate on a local committee.

Develop policies & support safe spaces

Organizational policies can provide very concrete strategies for employees and volunteers at youth-serving organizations. Work with administration and leaders at these agencies and groups to make sure they have policies and procedures regarding:

- Screening and background checks for employees and volunteers.
- Guidance on visitors and clearance for individuals interacting with children and teens that are not employees or volunteers.
- Examples and guidance for appropriate behaviors and interactions between adults and children and teens.
- Training requirements and standards regarding reporting suspected child abuse.
- Training and education on sexual violence prevention (Saul & Audage, 2007).

Sexual violence prevention is a valued priority when organizations invest in creating policies that protect children and teens and create spaces where respect and trust are paramount. One safe, supportive adult can make all the difference in the life of a child; empower adults in youth-serving organizations to be that person.

Resources

- **Darkness to Light:** www.d2l.org
- **Kidpower:** www.kidpower.org
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:** www.missingkids.com
- **The Hero Project - A Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape project:** www.heroproject.org
- **Stop It Now!:** www.stopitnow.org/



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