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Early Childhood Sexual Abuse Prevention Using the *Care for Kids* Program: The Importance of Educating Children and Adults



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We are all affected by sexual abuse...

...take care of yourself first!

New stats

Child Sexual Abuse Statistics

> National

- 25% of girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.
- 16-20% of boys are sexually abused before the age of 18.
- 33-50% of those who commit child sexual abuse are juveniles.

2011 Vermont Statistics

- 334 substantiated victims
 - 29% were ages 3-8
- 45% of abusers were juveniles

Today

In Vermont, CFK is used by

- ✓ Head Starts in several regions
- ✓ Childcare providers
- ✓ Home visitors
- ✓ Pre-schools
- ✓ K-2 classrooms
- ✓ Children's Advocacy Centers

Other parts of the country

- ✓ Virginia
- ✓ Nebraska
- ✓ Missouri
- ✓ New York City
- ✓ Baltimore
- ✓ Iowa
- ✓ Connecticut
- ✓ Colorado
- ✓ New Hampshire
- ✓ North Dakota
- ✓ New Mexico
- ✓ Massachusetts


Care for Kids

- Developed by the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark district health unit – Ontario, Canada
- <http://www.healthunit.org/carekids>

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

“Dedicated to the children of Prescott who were sexually abused and had the courage to ask for help.”

Care For Kids



“If we don’t teach our children about healthy sexuality, someone will teach them about unhealthy sexuality.”


—Adapted by Katherine McLoughlin of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, originally from Coleman McCarthy of The Center for Teaching Peace

Silence allows sexual abuse to continue

Answering Questions

- Brief
- Honest
- Developmentally appropriate

LAST Method



Empathy

- Build resilience
- Teach children to identify emotional cues
- Teach children to express emotions with words
- Prevent the development of abusive behaviors
 - Self-esteem
 - Nurturing skills

Accountability

- Help children understand what they are and are not responsible for
- Avoid the development of cognitive distortions
- Teach Consent

Themes & Messages

Bodies

Our bodies are good and special
(and deserving of care and respect, including the
genitals.)

Boys and girls have some parts that are different,
and many that are the same.



Themes & Messages

Babies

Babies need help with most things and deserve
to be looked after.

Children, as they grow, learn to do more things by themselves,
but they still need some help.



Themes & Messages

Feelings

Everyone has all kinds of feelings.

When you're not sure what you're feeling,
we call that "mixed up" (or confused).



Parent Meeting

- Requirement of Care For Kids
- Held prior to implementing children's curriculum
- Objectives:
 - Familiarize parents with themes, messages & activities
 - Parents practice answering children's questions
 - Calm fears/address concerns
 - Involve parents/guardians as a crucial part of a child's safety team!

Implementing Care For Kids

- Implementation is a process
- Training for child care professionals and teachers
- Skill-building workshop for parents and community members for message reinforcement – becoming “askable” adults
- Personal preparedness

Iowa

Tutty (2000)

Lessons learned

- Difficult concepts at later follow up
 - Saying "no" to authority
 - Trusted adults can be perpetrators
 - Children aren't to blame
- Understood concepts immediately
 - Saying no
 - Not at fault
 - Tell an adult
- Significant learning differences between 5-7 year olds and 8 and up
- Younger children need repetition and variety of teaching methods

Renk, Liljequist, Steinberg, et al (2002)

- Sex education needs to include descriptions of **healthy sexuality**, not just unhealthy behaviors
- Parents should provide education to children in home
 - Children more likely to retain concepts with repeated opportunities for discussion
 - Parents rated themselves as best teachers of these concepts

[Source: *Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, Are We Doing Enough?*]

Research on Adult Education

Format of Sessions

(from PCA Iowa's Best Practices Guide)

- These key design issues should be considered when developing and/or implementing 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
 - use **variety of presentation methods** that engage children
 - Songs, videos, worksheets, discussion
 - 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

Iowa's Implementation

- Search for new programs ⇒ PCA VT
- Kidnapping, rape and murder of Jetseta Gage (2005)
 - Legislative attention focused on punishment
 - Advocacy results in new funding for prevention - \$200,000
- Additional funds expanded adult education by more than 30 counties in one year

Why Care for Kids?

- Age appropriate information
- Multiple sessions, multiple years
- Away from "no, go, tell" and "good touch/bad touch" message
- Research-based
- **Adult education!**

Thank You!



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