

6 Steps for Preventing Adult Sexual Misconduct & Child Sexual Abuse.

[ESCAPE Program Logo: End Sexual abuse of Children with Prevention, Awareness and Education]

Educational Video Series. Developed in conjunction with Diane Cranley, an expert in child sexual abuse prevention. This module is part of a series designed to help school staff identify and report suspicious behaviors that may indicate child sexual abuse. A Discussion Guide accompanies each module of the series. A Collection of educational reading materials and resource lists are also included.

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Module 5: Off-Site Boundaries

[Sources cited in this video are included at the end of the transcript]

Narrator, Diane Cranley: Hello, I'm Diane Cranley, Author of 8 Ways to Create Their Fate and a Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Consultant. Welcome back to the Adult Sexual Misconduct and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Schools Series.

Today we'll focus on boundaries that protect students from sexual abuse during off-site activities, which pose an additional risk simply because it's an environment you don't control.

Source: 1

A formal pre-approval process slows everything down to ensure decisions for off-site trips are handled with a proactive evaluation of the need for the trip and the risk. It also ensures off-site trip requests are for the benefit of all students and not to gain access to an individual or small group of students. Let's look at some specific recommended boundaries and practices.

Source: 1

Institute a formal PRE-approval process for school sponsored off-site field trips. We recommend that your governing board pre-approves: A list of acceptable off-site "activities" and "locations" where these activities can take place, Which staff members are eligible to take students off-site and the expected frequency and duration, Identify any additional resources required for effective supervision and who's authorized to approve off-site activity requests. Whenever possible, we recommend a site inspection of each location to determine potential risks. All on-site boundaries apply as well, so it's important to consider isolated areas, staff coverage for bathroom visits, stranger access to students and all other existing boundaries.

Source: 1

Establish a formal practice of approving individual off-site activity requests. We recommend your process include the following steps:

- 1) A written request submitted at least three weeks prior to the event
- 2) If a request meets the pre-approved criteria, require two previously authorized personnel to provide written approval.

3) If the request does not meet the pre-approved criteria, the request should go to the board for approval prior to authorization.

4) Detailed informed consent forms should be sent to the parents and returned with written approval prior to the activity.

Source: 1

Volunteer chaperones are a cost-effective way to meet additional supervision requirements. Experts recommend all volunteer chaperones go through a full screening process including an application, interview, criminal background check, and reference checks; and be held to the same boundaries and standards as your staff. Some school leaders say that it's cost- and time-prohibitive to screen volunteers for single day events. If this is true in your district, we recommend you pair unscreened volunteers with a staff member who is with them at all times. However, we highly recommend you insist on full screening for repeat volunteers or any volunteer used for overnight trips, as well as for volunteer athletic coaches.

Since there is a cost associated with background checks, it is recommended to start a discussion now to secure funding for screening of all volunteers in the budget going forward. Remember that child molesters are looking for repeated and isolated access to children and the cost of abuse by an unscreened volunteer far outweighs the cost of the screening process.

Source: 1

Buses and district vehicles should be used whenever possible for off-site transportation within driving distance and be supervised by multiple fully screened school adults, except in cases that are formally reviewed, and board approved for purposes of meeting IEPs or other specific programmatic requirements. If a school adult finds themselves alone with a student due to unforeseen circumstances, they should follow their district policy regarding staff transportation of students. Experts provide the following guidelines to protect students and minimize the risk of school adults being falsely accused.

Immediately notify a supervisor or other administrator to apprise them of the situation.

Call the student's emergency contacts to arrange for pick-up.

If an emergency contact cannot be reached, arrange for a second school adult to join them and consider notifying local police to assist.

If a school administrator approves staff transportation of the student, have two school adults in the car and have the student sit in the back seat.

Transportation should begin and end at a centralized site where multiple students get in and out of the car or bus at the same time. Staff should never provide students rides to or from home. One study found that 46 percent of the offenders offered to give kids a ride home specifically as a strategy to gain access. For trips that require travel by plane, make every effort to ensure students are not seated next to strangers. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for abusers to grope minors who are sitting next to them, especially on nighttime flights when the lights are out.

Source: 1, 2

Adequate supervision for all students, regardless of age, should be provided for all off-site activities, especially overnight travel. Don't allow yourself to fall into a false sense of security by thinking that older students require less supervision—their independence is likely to present a greater opportunity for abuse and therefore an even higher risk for your organization. If your district has approved an overnight trip, ensure these measures are in place.

Source: 1

Staff members and chaperones should not enter a student's hotel room without the presence of a second adult and vice versa. Formal meetings and informal discussions should transpire in a communal area. If an adult needs to go to a student's hotel room, they should not enter without another adult present, instead speak to the student from the hallway.

Source:1, 3, 4

Staff members and parent chaperones should not consume alcohol, street drugs, or unnecessary prescription drugs at ANY time during the trip. Drug and alcohol use can alter an adult's judgment, leaving children more susceptible to inappropriate behavior. You also never know when you'll need to be with students unexpectedly or called upon to potentially save a child's life in an emergency. As a chaperone, you're "on" 24/7. A responsible adult should be awake at all times and be able to monitor all areas where students are sleeping and conduct periodic curfew checks.

Source: 1

Headline: Court rules former Paramus Catholic overseas chaperones cannot be charged with sexual

Whenever you take the students you serve outside their structured and well supervised environment, the risk of child sexual abuse increases. When it comes to interstate or international travel, we may not even be able to hold abusers accountable for their actions. In fact, because laws require prosecution in the jurisdiction where the crime occurred, abusers may intentionally use travel outside the country to abuse children without legal ramifications. Many school districts are eliminating all overnight field trips except for those within their home state.

We encourage you to make the safety of your students a priority - establish and enforce clear off-site travel boundaries that minimize the opportunity for them to be sexually abused while in your care. Your students are counting on you!

As we look forward to our next time together, we'll focus on how child molesters seek access not only within your program but through your program.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

What are your current policies and practices regarding off-site activities and overnight travel and how can they be strengthened based on what you've learned today?

Thank you for taking the time to watch this video and engage with us in preventing child sexual abuse. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact your Human Resources Department.

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Sources:

1. Diane Cranley, *8 Ways to Create their Fate: Protecting the Sexual Innocence of Children in Youth-Serving Organizations* (Mustang: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, LLC), 187-197.
2. Michele Elliott, Kevin Browne, and Jennifer Kilcoyne, "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: What Offenders Tell Us," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19, no. 5 (1995): 585, doi:10.1016/0145-2134(95)00017-3.
3. Megan Chuchmach, Avni Patel, and Vic Walker, "USA Swimming Coach Pleads No Contest to Having Sex with Underage Swimmer," *ABC News*, April 23, 2010, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/usa-swimming-coach-pleads-contest-sex-underage-swimmer/story?id=10460081>.
4. Sandy K. Wurtele, "Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Minors in Youth-serving Organizations," *Children and Youth Services Review* (2012): 2447, doi:10.1016/childyouth.2012.09.009.