

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 9: Student to Student Boundaries – Middle/High School

[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.

In our previous segments we've focused primarily on signs of adult misconduct and the boundaries that intercede. We covered; The Seductive Grooming Process, On-Site Boundaries, Off-Site Boundaries, Off-Hours Boundaries, Electronic and Social Media Boundaries and Gift Boundaries

Today we'll focus on sexually inappropriate behavior that happens BETWEEN students and the boundaries your district can put in place to minimize the risk.

30-40 percent of childhood sexual abuse happens at the hands of other minors, so we have a responsibility to understand this risk and make every effort to prevent it from happening on our campuses.

Sources: 1,2,3,4

First, let's look at the basics.

Students may touch each other sexually for a variety of reasons including; Natural and healthy intimate relationships between kids of similar age, size, and development level, Reflecting bad boundaries that they've been exposed to or Lack of social filters due to cognitive or behavioral disabilities.

Sources: 1,5,6

Students may also touch each other sexually because they're; Re-enacting sexual abuse that's happened or is still happening to them including sex trafficking or they have a sexual behavior problem that requires treatment.

In non-consensual cases, it's crucial that your response not only protects the students being touched, but that it also ensures the offending student gets the help they need to break these unhealthy and inappropriate behaviors.

In consensual cases, consider whether one or both students are violating site practice or district policy and ensure that any discipline or counseling is allocated appropriately. In consensual cases, consider that both students are violating school policy and allocate any discipline or counseling equitably.

All students will benefit from the policies you establish and enforce at school that clarify inappropriate behavior and appropriate boundaries.

Sources: 1,5,6

Student-to-student sexual abuse can be confusing to all involved and there's a tendency to minimize the issue and the impact on children. However, the consequences of child-on-child abuse can be just as significant as those experienced by a child who was abused by an adult.

So, we need to treat these allegations with the same level of concern as other allegations of abuse and respond to them as mandated reporters.

There can even be confusion among the authorities regarding who will handle the investigation of student-to-student abuse on campus.

We encourage you to discuss it with your local law enforcement and social service agency ahead of time so there is a clear plan as to who will take the lead on the investigation to protect the students' rights and ensure the safety and health of all students.

Let's look at some specific boundaries you can put in place to minimize the risk of student-to-student abuse on your campus.

Bathrooms should be supervised during all hours that students have access. This is especially important when a bathroom is shared between students of various ages or students with disabilities. Districts may consider using cameras outside the bathrooms to detect inappropriate patterns of bathroom usage.

Sources: 1

When more than one student has access, bathroom supervisors should be positioned at the door looking in toward the sinks. This will allow them to see the common area and hear student interactions, but the supervisor will still be visible from the outside.

Sources: 1

Bathrooms should provide privacy for all students, regardless of age. There should never be more than one student in a stall and if there are no stall doors, students should use the bathroom one at a time.

Sources: 1

All unoccupied areas should be locked when not in use such as classrooms, theaters, labs, locker rooms, and storage facilities. Students should never be given keys or access codes allowing them entry without appropriate staff supervision.

Such access provides opportunities for isolation that are both unnecessary and risky.

Establish assigned seating plans on buses when transporting students of differing ages or developmental levels on the same bus. Students should be assigned seats within sections by similar age ranges with the younger or more vulnerable populations seated toward the front of the bus, rather than interspersed with older students.

Programs should be designed for students of similar ages and developmental levels. Provide additional supervision when various age groups are brought together and pay close attention to physical and social power differences between students at all times.

Sources: 1,2,3,4

Student-to-student mentoring programs should include constant adult supervision. This minimizes the chance of directly or inadvertently creating a power differential which could be exploited outside the classroom to get younger students to participate in inappropriate sexual activities.

Sources: 1

The unfortunate reality is that students are not always safe in the presence of other students. Students need your leadership in establishing and modeling appropriate boundaries that will keep them safe not only on your school campus but also in other organizations, in their neighborhoods, and even in their own homes.

We hope this Adult Sexual Misconduct and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention series has raised your awareness and created dialog among you and your colleagues. More importantly we hope you've learned that there's a wide array of proactive steps you can take to better protect the students in your care.

We encourage you to leverage what you've learned to create or support a formal boundary policy and make childhood sexual abuse prevention part of your culture and your day-to-day practices.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Where do your policies and practices lack clarity about student boundaries and the expected consistent response to allegations of student-to-student sexual abuse?

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), 225-234.
2. Cynthia Simpson, Rebecca K. Odor, and Saba Masho, Childhood Sexual Assault Victimization in Virginia (2004): 1.
3. David Finkelhor, Heather Hammer, and Andrea J. Sedlak, Sexually Assaulted Children: National Estimates and Characteristics, NISMART, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (August 2008): 2.
4. David Finkelhor and Jennifer Dziuba-Leatherman, "Children as Victims of Violence: A National Survey," Pediatrics 94, no. 4 (October 1994): 414.
5. Toni Cavanagh Johnson, Helping Children with Sexual Behavior Problems: A Guidebook for Professionals and Caregivers (San Diego: Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma, 2014).

6. Toni Cavanagh Johnson, *Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors: What's Natural and Healthy* (San Diego: Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma, 2013).