



**Schools  
Insurance  
Group**

**End Sexual abuse of Children with**

**ESCAPE**  
**Awareness Prevention Education**

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



## **1 District Policies and Procedures:** Best Practices for Safe and Healthy Boundaries

## **2 Screening & Hiring:**

- Employees
- Volunteers

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- Students
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## TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972

All public and private elementary and secondary schools, school districts, colleges, and universities (hereinafter “schools”) receiving any Federal funds must comply with Title IX. Under Title IX, discrimination on the basis of sex can include sexual harassment or sexual violence, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion. For more information, visit the website; Know Your Rights. The following steps were designed to help districts and schools ensure that all student rights under Title IX are protected.

### 1. District Policies and Procedures - Best Practices for Safe and Healthy Boundaries:

Adopt an updated Board Policy from provided template with recommended safe and healthy boundaries for adult-to-student and student-to-student interactions will be provided to all districts. Consider the Model Code of Educator Ethics as a guidance document.

### 2. Screening & Hiring of Employees and Volunteers:

- Establish recommended district-wide hiring practices to include;
  - Fingerprinting/DOJ Criminal Background Checks,
  - Employment history reference checks with prior districts specifically related to sexual misconduct claims and disciplinary action and,
  - Review any action taken against a teaching certificate in any of the 50 states,
  - Adopt recommended interview questions that address an employee’s use of safe and healthy boundaries.

### 3 a. Training and Awareness - Employees:

- All employees are assigned and have completed the ESCAPE training series online.
- Training is required annually of every district employee and volunteer.
- Trainers conducting group training meet a minimum criteria for qualifications on the subject matter.
- A variety of awareness materials are disseminated to all employees via multiple media channels such as email, written and electronic newsletters, and website pages.

### 3 b. Training and Awareness - Students:

Educate Students on Safe and Healthy Boundaries. A variety of programs are available online including; TAALK - Youth Serving Organizations - Education Children, Yello Dyno - Child Protection Programs, Keep Kids Safe - Preventing Child Sexual Abuse, Stop It Now - Children's Sexuality Development and Behaviors.

#### **4. Reporting:**

In the event that School Adults observe suspicious or inappropriate behaviors on the part of other School Adults or between students, it is their personal duty to immediately report their observations, as outlined in district policy, to protect students from misconduct, harassment or sexual abuse. Note that there are multiple possible reporting agencies and depending on the situation, multiple reports may be required.

Adopt an electronic tool with anonymous reporting capability to ensure that anyone can report misconduct at any time.

Reports are handled according to the provided best practices and investigation steps.

#### **5. Investigation:**

The district will review every report to ensure that best practices are being followed with regards to investigation.

Any report meeting a threshold of identified flags will warrant a third-party investigation process led by professionals to remove all bias and ensure a thorough and fair investigation.

Investigations will be completed in a timely fashion with recommendations made for any necessary employment action, including specialized training when misconduct is not present, but healthy boundaries have not been maintained.

#### **6. Response:**

Protocols shall be established for how the district will communicate with families and communities in the event of an incident to ensure transparency, yet maintain privacy as required.



# 7

## **District Policies and Procedures:**

Best Practices for Safe and Healthy Boundaries



# 2 **Screening & Hiring:**

- Employees
- Volunteers

# Best Practices for Interviewing & Hiring

Prevention of Adult Sexual Misconduct is a top priority in California schools and across the Nation. To protect students from harm, several steps must be taken by the schools, beginning with hiring practices.

## Fingerprinting/DOJ Criminal Background Checks

California State Education Code requires school employers to obtain a criminal background (fingerprint) check of new classified employees and prohibits the employment or retention of current employees (certificated and classified) who have not yet obtained permanent status, if any person who has been convicted of a serious or violent felony.

Education code also requires any employer who provides certain services under contract to school districts to certify that no employee who renders those services and who may come in contact with pupils has been convicted of a serious or violent felony. These services include janitorial, administrative, landscaping, transportation, food services, or "similar services."

## Employment History Checks

All schools/districts should engage in thorough background checks beyond currently required fingerprinting and criminal background checks. Background checks should include extensive inquiry with past employers to determine if any concerns existed with regards to adult-to-student behaviors and engagement. This right of the district is protected and Districts have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for students in schools.

## Certificate Clearance

Schools/district should process all hires through a nationwide system that tracks action taken against teaching certificates in all 50 states. The NASDTEC database/clearing house is one such program. The results would alert the district/school to any prior disciplinary action taken against certificated employees.

## Interview Questions

Lastly, and importantly, the included Sample Interview Questions should be used to screen candidates during an interview. These questions serve to help the school/district better determine a potential staff member's understanding of safe and healthy boundaries for students as well as their ability to support those boundaries.

## Hiring

Upon review of the information provided in the background check, the school/district has an obligation to make a responsible choice that serves to fully protect the students.

# Sample Interview Questions

Following these recommendations for hiring practices will help to ensure all employees hired support the safe environment of a student's school.

## Pillars of Character Questions:

Tell me about a time when you were faced with having to make a choice between doing the right thing and taking the easy or comfortable way out.

Respect is earned. How would your colleagues say you have earned their respect?

What standards do you use when setting a good example for the children in your care?

## Boundary Focused Questions:

How do you build trust and rapport with the kids in your care?

What kind of relationship would you like to foster with the parents of the kids in your care?

Explain how your past experience will help you manage kids' behavior in this position.

What kind of tangible and intangible rewards do you use to promote good behavior?

What is your philosophy on "respect for authority?"

Were there specific boundaries in place at your previous employers to minimize the risk of child abuse? What were they?

How did the boundaries impact the staff's ability to serve kids?

Have you ever suspected a child in your care was being sexually abused by a colleague? What happened?

What personal boundaries do you enforce that help protect kids and mitigate your risk of being falsely accused of sexual abuse?

Tell me about your level of awareness regarding the prevalence and risk of child sexual abuse.

Tell me about any formal or informal training you have had specific to preventing child sexual abuse.

Tell me about any formal child sexual abuse prevention programs in place at your previous employers (or volunteer organizations).





## **Training and Awareness:**

- Employees
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# Employees



# Students



## Youth Organizations: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention-Educate and Empower Children

Empowering kids to hold others accountable for honoring these boundaries is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Tell kids the boundaries
2. Tell kids to remind anyone who forgets a boundary
3. Tell kids to tell their parents and another staff member or volunteer when someone forgets

Educating and empowering children to experience a life free from sexual abuse is a multi-step process that unfolds as they mature and includes the five key components listed below. At a minimum, every organization should be empowering children with the boundaries you have established.

- ♦ Respect Healthy Boundaries: Tell kids the boundaries that stop grooming behaviors and empower them to expect the boundaries to be honored
- ♦ Talk about Sex and Sexual Abuse: Help kids embrace healthy sexuality and teach them the language of abuse, giving them permission to tell
- ♦ Have a Heart for Others: Develop in them a compassionate heart for others who are hurting
- ♦ Recognize Healthy Peer Relationships: Equip them to create healthy relationships with peers
- ♦ Establish Healthy Relationships with Younger Children: Prepare them to manage their own behavior and boundaries with younger children and to recognize concerning behavior in others.

The vast majority of the boundaries set forth in this program are designed to be managed by staff, volunteers and parents collectively, especially during the preschool years. However, there are a number of boundaries that could be broken without another adult's knowledge. Therefore, kids need to be empowered by knowing what those boundaries are and instilling in them the expectation that they will be honored.



## How To Talk About Sexual Abuse Safety

Did you know that [most children never report](#) sexual abuse while it's happening? If you think that's crazy, think about this: Most sexual abusers are someone known and trusted by your family, not a stranger. The combination of a trusted family member or friend creating feelings of emotional obligation or fear can put anyone in a tough corner, much less children who haven't been explicitly taught that it's a-ok to discuss situations that have made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Eight out of ten children who are sexually abused already know their abuser. That's why a parent's most important step in sexual abuse prevention is to talk to your kids about it early and often. You may never be able to completely prevent your child from encountering harm. But when it comes to sexual abuse, you can do a lot to reduce your child's vulnerability and to increase the chance that they'll tell you if something does happen. The idea of having this difficult conversation might seem even scarier than finally breaking down the "birds and the bees". To make it easier, we've gathered tips on how to best approach the conversation of sexual abuse safety, so it's easier to start and repeat (remember: early and often!)

### 1. Focus on safety, instead of framing the conversation as something taboo or "dirty".

Even young children are adept at picking up when something is wrong. Instead of starting with scare-facts, speak from a calm, loving and casual frame of mind. Talk about sexual abuse prevention as you would any other safety matter, such as not answering the door for strangers, wearing your seatbelt, or what to do if they get lost. As a parent, you're confident that your child knows not to touch the hot stove because it's been repeated many times. Approach sexual abuse safety the same way, and you child will be just as prepared to avoid these dangers as well.

#### When Asked Why They Didn't Tell:

"I was too young to realize it was wrong."

"I didn't want my parents to know."

"I was ashamed."

"I thought I would get in trouble."

"I thought no one would believe me."

"He told me he would hurt my family."

### 2. Start talking to them early.

Experts say children under 12 are most vulnerable to sexual abuse at age 4, and suggest you should start talking about sexual abuse safety as early as two! The key word is "safety" and the conversation can come up in easy ways. For example, giving your child a bath is a good time to learn about their private areas. Let your child know that these body parts are their own and even though mom and dad have to occasionally clean them up, no one else should ever look or touch them there.

### 3. Teach them the actual names of their private parts.

Experts advocate that parents teach their children proper body names, such as "vagina" and "penis", from an early age, right along with other body parts such as fingers, ears and toes. Giving private parts "cutesy" names may make a child feel shame when discussing them. However, using the correct words early on makes discussing sexual abuse safety easier if you lay the groundwork that there's no need to be embarrassed. Using the correct words for body parts allows children to express themselves clearly if something is wrong. In one case, a child told her parent that her stomach was hurting. When they took her to the doctor, he informed them that her vagina showed signs of rape. Their little daughter had been trying to tell them what was happening, but she just didn't know what to call her vagina. So she said stomach instead.

Continued...



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**4. Talk to them about what is ok.**

Depending on the age of your child, they might still need parents or caregivers to keep their bottoms clean, safe and healthy. Talk to your child about why this activity is ok, so they can understand when you or a trusted caregiver might need to see their private parts. Giving examples of why someone is seeing or touching their privates when it happens, like a bath or doctor's visit, can help them recognize when someone shouldn't be.

**5. Teach them not to be ashamed.**

Understanding that private parts are special is an important step in healthy development. Private parts can feel "tingly and nice" even at an early age, and it's not uncommon to find kids exploring these sensations. Ask if they know what it feels like when you are touching to keep them clean, safe and healthy, and explain that while their privates can feel tingly and nice, those places are just for them.

**6. Teach them (and respect) their right to control their bodies.**

Adults normally have absolute authority over everything, teaching children that they have to say and do what they're told. But that creates a problem when children are indirectly taught not to speak up if they feel hurt or scared because of an adult's actions. Instead, empower your child that [their body is theirs](#) and they have permission to say "no" to an adult's request to touch if it makes them uncomfortable. For example, when you're at a social event, consider not making your child kiss or hug anyone they don't want to. If an adult tries to make them, it's your chance to support your child's choice. Let your child know they can give a kiss, hug, handshake, or nothing to people they see and it's entirely up to them.

**7. Encourage them to trust their gut.**

Teaching your child to trust their gut instincts empowers them to make their own choices about who's safe, instead of relying on the opinion of adults. One way is to tell the child before social events that if they ever feel uncomfortable with someone – even if nothing has happened – they can leave the room and you. When a child learns that their sense of safety is more important than the need to be "polite", they're more confident protecting themselves and speaking up whether or not you're in the next room.

**8. Explain that because you love them, they can share their secrets.**

Many abusers tell their child victims that what happened was a secret and to not tell anyone, especially their parents. So it's important to teach them early on that secrets are still kept secret if they tell their mom or dad. Additionally, they should understand anyone who wants them to keep secrets from their parents shouldn't be trusted and they should definitely tell their parents about it, even if the secret was a present or something nice.

**But Here's the Most Important Thing:**

Every family has individual preferences when approaching talks about private parts. However, you choose to talk to your child about sexual abuse safety, keep the conversation ongoing, open and casual.

Just like traffic or fire safety, you wouldn't tell your child something life-saving only once! Instead, you tell them again and again, and even quiz them to make sure they will always be safe.

It's the same deal for sexual abuse – start having the conversation at an early age, and it becomes even easier as they grow older. While nothing can keep children 100% safe, if you keep an open, casual dialogue with your child, keep an eye out for signs, and pay attention to how your child responds to people, you've significantly reduced the risk of someone sexually abusing your child.

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# Parents



# 4

## **Reporting**

- District Policy Violations
- Mandated Reporter



## Duty to Report

In the event that School Adults observe suspicious or inappropriate behaviors on the part of other School Adults or between students, it is their personal duty to immediately report their observations as outlined below to protect students from misconduct, harassment or sexual abuse. Note that there are multiple possible reporting agencies and **depending upon the situation, multiple reports may be required.**

### Mandated Reporter – Child Protective Services Report

A School Adult who has knowledge of, or reasonably suspects that, child abuse has occurred, shall file a report with Child Protective Services, pursuant to the District's child abuse reporting procedures as required by *ARTICLE 2.5. Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act [11164 - 11174.3] of the California Penal Code and CHAPTER 3.2. Staff Development in the Detection of Child Abuse and Neglect [44691- 44691.] of the California Education Code.*

**NOTE:** A report required as above is separate from a report required by District Policy Violation.

Agencies that are required to receive reports of suspected child abuse or neglect may not refuse to accept a report of suspected child abuse or neglect from a mandated reporter or another person unless otherwise authorized pursuant to this section, and shall maintain a record of all reports received. *California Penal Code ARTICLE 2.5. Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act §11165.9.*

### Criminal Activity – Local Law Enforcement Report

When a School Adult has reasonable suspicion of another School Adult harming or endangering a child she/he/they shall **immediately** report such conduct directly to the local law enforcement agency (District police or security is excluded per Section 11165.9 of the California Penal Code) followed by a report to the Superintendent or designee either in person, or by phone, email or anonymous reporting tool as identified by the District.

### District Policy Violation – District Superintendent or Designee Report

There may be times when a School Adult perceives conduct that violates a District policy, but may not surmount, in their minds, to reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect. These policy violations must still be documented. When a school adult observes another School Adult's conduct that is in violation of or contradiction of District policies, he/she/they must disclose that violation to the District Superintendent or designee either in person, or by phone, email or anonymous reporting tool as identified by the District. The conduct may be disclosed to the site administrator or to Human Resources as well, however, this process is specifically reserved for situations where reasonable suspicion does not exist.

When a School Adult gains knowledge of, or has reasonable suspicion of violation of or contradiction of the boundaries identified in this policy, between any School Adult **and a student** a report must be made to the local law enforcement agency (as outlined below) as well as to the District Superintendent or designee.

## Response to Reports: Suspected Abuse by a School Adult

### School Adult:

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she did the right thing by telling you
- Report the incident immediately to Child Protective Services as applicable
- Report the incident immediately to Local Law Enforcement as applicable
- Report the incident/policy violation immediately to the District Superintendent or designee or via the anonymous reporting tool provided by the District
- Document the incident, disclosure with observed and factual information only. Opinions should not be included on the incident report.
- Do not investigate the incident yourself

### Supervisor and Administrator:

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

- Determine the immediate needs of the victim and provide information regarding services available.
- Ensure that the incident has been reported to the proper authorities; Child Protective Services, Local Law Enforcement and District Superintendent or designee or via the anonymous reporting tool provided by the District
- Notify parent/guardians of the student(s) of the incident and ensure them that all appropriate and required reports have been filed
- Remove the accused from access to students
- Review the file of the accused
- Gather and document information surrounding the incident
- Local Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services have a responsibility to investigate suspicion of criminal activity or child abuse. The District has a responsibility to investigate policy violations. Coordinate with Child Protective Services and Local Law Enforcement as to who will perform various aspects of the investigation.
- If authorities request that the District takes no action, document the request and proceed in accordance with it.
- If authorities do not request that the District take no action, District officials may proceed with the internal investigation or contract with a third party investigator to complete the internal investigation
- If abuse and/or violations of School policies are confirmed, follow the District's disciplinary procedures.
- Report to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) regarding possible educational misconduct, as required
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident including, but not limited to; targeted training on boundary policies and appropriate behaviors with students
- Notify the community as appropriate

### District Response

After the internal investigation is complete, the District will review the following to provide additional protections for students:

- Consider the need for additional supervision
- Consider the need for revised policies or procedures
- Consider the need for additional training

## Response to Reports: Student-to-Student Sexual Activity/Abuse

### School Adult Response

In the event that a School Adult sees a student exhibit sexualized behaviors or suspects unlawful student-to-student sexual activity, the School Adult should do the following:

- Report the incident immediately to Child Protective Services as applicable
- Report the incident immediately to Local Law Enforcement as applicable
- Report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent or designee
- Document the incident, disclosure with observed and factual information only. Opinions should not be included on the incident report.
- Do not investigate the incident yourself.

### Supervisor or Administrator Response

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a student's sexualized behavior or unlawful student-to-student sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

- Determine the immediate needs of the victim and provide information regarding services available including Title IX rights
- Ensure that the incident has been reported to the proper authorities; Child Protective Services, Local Law Enforcement and District Superintendent or designee.
- Notify parent/guardians of both students of the incident and ensure them that all appropriate and required reports have been filed
- Remove the accused student from access to other students
- Review the file of the accused student for prior incidents
- Gather and document information surrounding the incident
- Local Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services have a responsibility to investigate suspicion of criminal activity or child abuse. The District has a responsibility to investigate policy violations. Coordinate with Child Protective Services and Local Law Enforcement as to who will perform various aspects of the investigation.
- If authorities request that the District takes no action, document the request and proceed in accordance with it.
- If authorities do not request that the District take no action, District officials may proceed with the internal investigation or contract with a third party investigator to complete the internal investigation
- If abuse and/or violations of School policies are confirmed, follow the District's policy for student disciplinary procedures.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident.
- Notify the community as appropriate

### District Response

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or unlawful student-to-student sexual activity, the District will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

- Consider the need for additional supervision
- Consider the need for revised policies or procedures
- Consider the need for additional training
- Alert others in the organization



# 5

## Investigation

- District investigation of the report
- Law enforcement investigation to the report

*Guidelines in development*

## Investigation:

A District coordinator, as required by Title IX, will be established to oversee all reports and investigations. The District coordinator will review every report received to ensure that best practices are being followed with regards to investigation.

When a report is made concerning a possible policy violation, the District coordinator in coordination with the site supervisor, shall conduct a prompt initial investigation utilizing District procedures for investigations of allegations of serious misconduct. The investigation shall include a review of the full history of concerns relating to the subject of the concern/complaint.

Immediate intervention shall be considered and implemented when necessary to protect student safety and/or the integrity of the investigation.

Any report meeting a **threshold of identified flags** will warrant a third-party investigation process led by professionals to remove all bias and ensure a thorough and fair investigation.

Investigations will be completed in a timely fashion with recommendations made for any necessary employment action, including specialized training when misconduct is not present, but appropriate boundaries have not been maintained.

## Law Enforcement Investigation:

When law enforcement has begun an investigation of an incident it is imperative that all district investigations are conducted with legal counsel and in cooperation with law enforcement.

*Guidelines in development*



# 6

## **Response**

- Disciplinary Action
- Notifications

*Guidelines in development*

## Disciplinary Action:

All School Adults shall be disciplined up to and including termination and/or legal action, for noncompliance with this policy. Examples of noncompliance include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to maintain appropriate boundaries when interacting and communicating with students.
- Failure to appropriately intervene or report when witnessing, observing, and becoming cognizant of prohibited or unauthorized student-School Adult or student-to-student interactions.
- Failure to fulfill duties and requirements as mandated reporters under the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act [11164 - 11174.3]
- Failure to report to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) regarding possible educational misconduct, as required by their role.

In the case of a certificated School Adult, the School Adult may be subject to a report to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The Superintendent or designee shall notify Local Law Enforcement as appropriate.

A volunteer, student teacher, independent contractor or a School Adult employed by an independent contractor who violates this policy may be prohibited from working or serving in District Schools and programs for an appropriate period of time or permanently, as determined by the Superintendent or designee.

A School Adult who has knowledge of but fails to report School Adult conduct in violation of this policy may also be subject to discipline.





## Communications:

*Guidelines in development*





# Resources

# Regulations

California Education Code

ARTICLE 4. Sex Equity in Education Act [221.5 - 231.5]

California Education Code

CHAPTER 3.2. Staff Development in the Detection of  
Child Abuse and Neglect [44691- 44691.]

California Penal Code

ARTICLE 2.5. Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act  
[11164 - 11174.3]

## Summary & Discussion Guide:

### Module 1 – Introduction

#### Facts

- 1 in 4 girls, 1 in 6 boys (Source 1, 2, 3)
  - Will be sexually abused before the age of 18
- Nearly 50% of women in prison were abused. (Source 10)
- Over 75% of serial rapists report they were sexually abused as children. (Source 10)
- 35-45% of childhood molestation happens within the family. (Source 1, 3, 11)
  - School employees must be trained to recognize the signs & symptoms of abuse.
- 55-60% of child molestation happens at the hands of someone outside the family that the child knows and trusts. (Source 1, 3, 12)
- 86% of sexual assault cases are never reported. (Source 5)

#### Consequences

- Sexual abuse consequences are staggering and apparent; possible emotions and events in survivors are: (Source 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
  - Anger, aggression, depression
  - Criminal behavior, suicide, dissociation
  - Promiscuity, teen pregnancy, STDs
  - Drug and alcohol abuse, cutting, eating disorders
- Long-term consequences can also impact our communities. (Source 10)
  - Rising healthcare cost, social services cost and increased prison population
- Millions of dollars have been spent to resolve these types of claims and losses.
  - Money taken directly out of the classroom (Source 8)

#### Future Focus

- As awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse in schools increases, our efforts toward prevention must increase as well.
- Empower & equip school communities to understand when and how to intercede on behalf of children while in the school's care.
- Everyone plays a part in the solution.

#### Reflection Questions:

1. How have you been impacted by sexual abuse around you?
2. How has your district been impacted by child sexual abuse?
3. How can you help your school district/community understand the importance of the prevention of child molestation?

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