

Key Components of Effective Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programming for Children

We recognize both the limited research available on the effects of specific programs and the diverse needs, resources and student populations in Pennsylvania schools, and therefore have chosen not to promote any one specific prevention curriculum. Instead, we recommend the following key components from which each school or district can create an effective and comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention program:

- Programs should include children as physically active learning participants, combining the techniques of modeling, group discussion, and role-playing/ rehearsal (Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Topping & Barron, 2009).
- Programs should be broken into multiple sessions (Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Topping & Barron, 2009) and be conducted at least annually, building on skills learned the previous year.
- Programs should be developmentally appropriate for the targeted age group (Sarno & Wurtele, 1997). Ideally, effective prevention programs targeted to young children do not use abstract concepts, provide many chances to practice skills, teach important concepts multiple times, teach the program over several days, and present the program in a way that is engaging to the children.
- Programs should be culturally sensitive and adaptable for use within varying school contexts (age, race, special needs, etc.).
- Programs should incorporate parents/caregivers into prevention efforts due to their key role in protecting children from abuse (Kenny et al., 2008; Topping & Barron, 2009).
- Professionals delivering these prevention programs should have a thorough knowledge of child sexual abuse, including how to respond appropriately to disclosures.
- Programs should include an evaluation component with measurable outcomes.
- Although research is limited on the effects of specific curricula, we recommend that schools seek to implement programs that include an evidence-based curriculum if possible.

References

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