

Top 15 Tips to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

1. If a child/youth is vulnerable (meaning they have a chaotic or violent home environment, they have a trauma history, they have been or are being bullied, they exhibit signs of low self-esteem or social anxiety), then make sure they get the mental health or social skills training they need to overcome trauma, manage mental health issues and form friendships with peers.
2. Ensure that employees working with youth are properly screened and vetted to make sure they have no criminal history including are not on a Sexual Offender Registry. Encourage parents to vet all babysitters including romantic partners and family members.
3. Ensure that there are policies in place in your place of work that protect children (e.g. few if any allowances for adults to be alone with children, mechanisms for reporting problematic staff behavior, mechanisms for reporting child sexual abuse).
4. Ensure children and youth you serve have access to information (preferably using evidence based curricula) on healthy relationships, intimate partner violence and control, healthy sexual and emotional development and ways to prevent harmful outcomes.
5. Teach parents about healthy sexual development, how to have open conversations with children about their bodies, sex and relationships from birth through emerging adulthood.
6. Support policies (e.g. paid family leave act), practices and programs (e.g. Nurturing Parent, Triple P, PCIT, HANDS) that enhance parents' ability to form secure attachments with their children.
7. Encourage parents to label their children's body parts accurately, to ask for permission to touch their private parts when changing a diaper or giving them a bath, and to insist that everyone ask for permission before hugging, kissing or touching their child. By age 3 introduce the concept of "private parts" and that they are "off limits" to others.
8. Children are curious about their bodies, their sexuality, other people's bodies and the role of gender in society. They will touch themselves, seek pleasure, play "doctor" with other children, and go through a range of reactions with regards to gender. All of this is normal. It is important for adults to stay calm, redirect self-play to private areas of the home, talk about love, relationships, sexuality and the role of gender throughout life in appropriate ways given the child's age.
9. Watch for the over-sexualization of young girls in our society and encourage girls to focus on doing well in school, sports, the arts and other activities. De-emphasize their appearance, being "popular," or having a boyfriend. Talk to them (as well as

boys) about the downside to girls of giving boys oral sex, hooking up, and taking emotional and physical risks.

10. Encourage parents to keep children and especially teenagers busy and under the supervision of responsible and trusted adults (as opposed to being left home alone for long periods of time or running the streets). Monitoring of child and teen behavior and whereabouts helps to keep them safe from predators.
11. Encourage parents to monitor what children and teens are exposed to on the internet (keep computers and phones in family spaces for surveillance), in video games, TV shows, movies, streaming on-line and on phones. Watch shows with them to discuss issues about sex, relationships and abuse that arise so that you can teach them your values and why some of the behavior being portrayed is not respectful or safe. Ensure that they are not sharing nude photos on their phones.
12. Encourage single parents to keep dates and partners away from their children (at least 9 months) until they are certain of the character of the partner and until a long term commitment is imminent. Adults who are not parents or step-parents (married to the child's parent) are 9 x more likely to abuse a child than are parents.
13. Encourage parents to not allow their children to date people who are more than 2 years older. Encourage parents to meet all of their children's friends and dates. Watch for warning signs that a teen is being controlled or abused by a dating partner. Call homes before their children go there to spend the night or attend a party to find out who will be in attendance, that proper supervision will occur and to share what their values are concerning underage drinking, drug use and sex. Don't allow a child to go somewhere that is dangerous, unsupervised or where parents' values do not match your own.
14. Encourage parents to know the sexual history of the other parent(s) of their child(ren) so as to avoid any family members or close family friends who are predators.
15. Encourage parents to get to know all adults in their child's life (family, neighbors, teachers, ministers, coaches), to drop into child care centers, after school programs, sports practices, etc. so that adults know they are watching.