

Get Kids and Guardians Involved in Preventing Sexual Abuse

The role of volunteers and staff is critical to protecting our children in schools, camps, and other church activities. They, more than anyone, need to constantly be looking for signs of sexual abuse and making certain that both adults and children adhere to the boundaries outlined by your church's youth program policies.

But the efforts to prevent sexual abuse should not end there. If educated and encouraged, children and their parents or guardians can add another layer of protection and help your organization to foster a safe environment.

How to encourage “consumer” participation

Consumers are the children who participate in your organization's programs, as well as their parents or guardians. When children and their guardians know more about sexual abuse, it provides them with the confidence to act on concerns and protect themselves.

Here are some ways in which consumer participation helps prevent sexual abuse:

- Education about rules helps children recognize boundary violations, which helps them learn to trust their intuition
- Education about sexual abuse provides parents/guardians with the ability to recognize red flags that might appear away from camp, school, or church
- When parents/guardians know the systems you have in place, it provides them with ways to report concerns

What should children and parents/guardians know?

Provide children with the following information:

- Appropriate boundaries
- Policies regarding outside contact
- How to report concerns

Provide parents/guardians with the following information:

- How to talk to children about prevention and address any concerns they might have
- Policies for preventing abuse
- Where to take concerns back to your organization
- When to call police

How do you educate children and their parents/guardians?

Create opportunities to educate both parents/guardians and youth. Their active participation in the prevention of sexual abuse can make a significant difference. Make sure that your educational outreach is age appropriate for the parties involved.

For adults:

- Offer education workshops
- Provide online courses and resources, as well as handbooks
- Give information on dedicated web pages and in newsletters and bulletins
- Encourage adults to participate in surveys, so you can understand what works — and what does not — in your program

For children:

- Provide handbooks, as well as both formal and informal curricula to keep boundaries and policies top of mind
- Encourage participation in orientation
- Ask children to fill out age-appropriate surveys

Safety Equation

Consumer participation is one part of the **Safety Equation**, which also includes:

- **Screening and Selection**
- **Supervision and Monitoring**
- **Internal Feedback Systems**
- Policies
- Responding
- Administrative Practices
- Training

When you involve children and their guardians in their safety, you put up one more line of defense against the chance of sexual abuse occurring in your organization. To find out more about how you can create an environment conducive to involving children and their guardians in sexual abuse prevention, or for more information about the **Safety Equation**, click on the link below:

http://armatus2.praesidiuminc.com/publicCourse/kys_1/story_html5.html.