



Have questions?

Need resources?

**Get Help Now!**

Online Help Center  
<http://GetHelp.StopItNow.org>

Stop It Now!<sup>®</sup> prevents the sexual abuse of children by mobilizing adults, families and communities to take actions that protect children before they are harmed.



### ***Safety In Daycare/Educational Settings***

Children learn best in safe environments. Most child care providers and teachers know that protecting children from physical harm includes taking actions such as monitoring stairway entrances. But what about keeping children safe from sexual harm? What actions can be taken then?

### ***Protecting Children From Sexual Harm***

#### **What Teachers and Childcare Providers Need to Know Know the facts about abuse**

Children are most at risk to be sexually abused by someone they know and trust. About half of sexual abuse (40 to 60%) happens within families. There is no typical sex offender<sup>1</sup> profile--child sexual abuse happens in all racial, religious, age and ethnic groups, and at all socio-economic levels.

#### **Do children sexually touch other children?**

Yes. More than a third of those who sexually abuse children are under the age of 18 themselves. In many instances, especially with younger children, a child may not understand that his or her forceful sexual actions toward another child are harmful.

#### **Learn about age-appropriate sexual development**

Find out what what sexual behaviors are developmentally expected for a particular age group and what behaviors are uncommon and need a response. See our resources on [age- appropriate sexual behavior](#) in children.

#### **Learn about warnings signs**

People who sexually abuse children often show signs before actually committing abuse. At Stop It Now! we help adults recognize certain warning signs exhibited by someone who may be having sexual thoughts or feelings towards children; or someone who may not understand what is considered appropriate behavior with and around children. Learn more on what to [watch out for when adults or youth are with children](#).

#### **Speak up when you recognize concerning behaviors**

Too often, adults feel that before they speak up they must have 100% proof that a child is being – or is in jeopardy of being – sexually abused. The truth is, if we wait for proof, it becomes too late to prevent a child from further harm. Learn the [warning signs](#) so you can recognize behaviors before abuse occurs.

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### Learn about Reporting

Teachers and child care providers are mandated to report their concerns about sexual abuse. While it is important to know your employer's policies about filing claims, in many states you are required to report concerns regardless of employer policy.

Reporting sexual abuse can mean both the person who behaved inappropriately and the child who may have been harmed get the help they need. Sometimes adults don't report their concerns about someone's inappropriate or illegal behavior towards a child, because they don't want to hurt them by reporting their concerns to authorities. Too often, this decision leaves other children vulnerable and can feel like the adult is choosing the person who hurt the child over the child who was hurt.

There is more to filing a report than just the filing. Sometimes when adults report their concerns about child sexual abuse to authorities, no action will be taken. This doesn't mean your concerns weren't valid, nor does it mean that a child hasn't been harmed.

### What if this is my colleague?

Criminal background checks can give a false sense of security. While profiling is an important tool, the difficult truth is that the vast majority (88%) of sexual abuse goes unreported. This means that 9 times out of 10, a person who sexually abused a child will have no criminal record at all -- even though they may have abused in the past.

### *Preventing Sexual Abuse: What Teachers and Child Care Providers Can Do*

#### 1. Create policies that reduce risk

Create policies and practices that reduce the risk of harming children. Don't wait for a child to be harmed; create a prevention policy for your school or child care program or urge your leadership to do so. For example, it's good practice for schools and child care settings to prohibit one-on-one contact between an adult and a child by instituting a Two Adult Rule. It's good practice, too, to prohibit meetings with children when others can't see or hear the interaction. Similarly, all touching between an adult and a child should take place within sight and hearing of others.

#### 2. Create rules that protect caregivers

In-home child care providers face additional risks, particularly when other household members are in the home with childcare children. For the safety of your childcare business and your family, create clear rules about family and other household members interacting with children. These rules will reduce the risk of accusations of inappropriate sexual contact with children. Do not allow other household members to change diapers or be alone with a child.

#### 3. Encourage adults to take responsibility

Don't rely on children to keep themselves safe. Child safety education can be an important tool, but it is not enough to keep children safe from sexual abuse. But, children are often reluctant to speak up against someone they love who might abuse them. Read more about [what you can do to keep children safe](#).



#### 4. Practice speaking up

Parents rely on teachers and child care providers to know and understand all aspects of child development. They may not know or recognize concerning behaviors in their children. [Practice speaking up](#) about concerning behaviors that you see in children, youth, and other adults.

#### 5. Question confusing or uncertain behaviors and practices

Nobody wants to accuse a colleague of inappropriate sexual behavior or sexual abuse. By initiating discussions about inappropriate behaviors and modeling how to talk about concerning situations, teachers and child care providers can create a safe atmosphere that encourages adults to take action before children are harmed.

#### 6. Get age-appropriate information for kids

Encourage parents to provide accurate, age-appropriate information to their children about sexuality. [Resources for Parents](#).

#### 7. Know how to report

Get your questions about reporting answered. Before you need to file a report, check with your program director, principal, or licensing organization so you can get any questions answered regarding internal policies for your organization and mandates as they apply to you in your state.

For more information and guidance, please visit our Online Help Center, <http://GetHelp.StopItNow.org>.