

You've had a high profile incident, now what?

Incidents like these help us realize that no community or organization is immune to child sexual abuse. Even when there are prevention programs in place, it takes training and empowering all adults who interact with children to ensure kids are as safe as possible.

This resource will take you through what you need to do to help your community learn from this incident and move forward in a positive way, to prevent incidents like this from happening in the first place. Facilitating a positive reaction includes:



Talking openly about the issue, and sharing the facts about child sexual abuse and why adult prevention education is essential



Showing the immeasurable impact of child sexual abuse on the community and the urgency of addressing the issue



Initiating a dialogue in your community on what you can do to prevent child sexual abuse including community actions and talking to your kids



Providing resources to empower community members to get involved, including the *5 Steps to Protecting our Children*[™] and *Stewards of Children*[®] as successful tools for improving child protective behaviors

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: THE ISSUE

Our Stance

- We believe that every child has the right to grow up happy and free from child sexual abuse.
- Protecting children is an adult responsibility.
- Education of adults is essential. Educating children about their bodies and safety is important; however it is not sufficient to keep them safe.
- Widespread education is what will eventually change cultural norms that allow abuse to happen.
- Prevention training gives us the power to address abuse and helps dramatically reduce the risk of abuse occurring.
- Darkness to Light programs raise awareness of the prevalence and consequences of child sexual abuse by educating adults about the steps they can take to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to the reality of child sexual abuse.

The Facts*

- One in 10 children are abused before the age of 18 meaning 400,000 children are sexually abused each year.
- 90% of the time, children are sexually abused by someone they know.
- 60% of children who are sexually abused are abused by people the family trusts.
- 80% of the time, child sexual abuse happens in isolated, one-on-one situations.
- About one in seven girls and one in 25 boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18.
- Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults (including assaults on adults) occur to children ages 17 and under. Youths have higher rates of sexual assault victimization than do adults.
- 81% of child sexual abuse incidents for all ages occur in one-perpetrator/one-child circumstances. Six to 11-year-old children are most likely (23%) to be abused in multiple-victim circumstances.
- Most sexual abuse of children occurs in a residence, typically that of the victim or perpetrator – 84% for children under age 12, and 71% for children aged 12 to 17.
- Sexual assaults on children are most likely to occur at 8 a.m., 12 p.m. and between 3 and 4 p.m. For older children, aged 12 to 17, there is also a peak in assaults in the late evening hours.
- Abusers often form relationships with potential victims and their families prior to the abuse. This is called "grooming."
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Grooming*

- Grooming is a process by which an offender gradually draws a victim into a sexual relationship and maintains that relationship in secrecy. At the same time, the offender may also fill roles within the victim's family that make the offender trusted and valued.
- Grooming behaviors can include:
 - Special attention, outings, and gifts
 - Isolating the child from others
 - Filling the child's unmet needs
 - Filling needs and roles within the family
 - Treating the child as if he or she is older
 - Gradually crossing physical boundaries, and becoming increasingly intimate/sexual
 - Use of secrecy, blame, and threats to maintain control

Source: <http://www.D2L.org/Statistics>

More About Prevention Education

- Prevention training doesn't guarantee that sexual abuse will not happen – but it helps dramatically reduce the risk for abuse by providing adults with the tools to understand the issue, create policies and organizational structures that protect children, recognize warning signs and behaviors, and intervene if they suspect or discover abuse.
- We are all on alert for "stranger danger," and though that's important, it's rarely the reality. 90% of the time, children are abused by someone they know and trust. And 80% of the time, it's in isolated, one-on-one situations. If you remove the opportunity for isolated interactions between adults and children (and children and other youth), you significantly reduce risk.
- Without prevention, incidents like this seem to come from nowhere and blindsides the whole community. Our children and their families are traumatized, and the rest of us wonder how this could happen.

Talking Points

- Were the signs there? Most likely, they were. For example, tickling gone too far, singling out specific children - especially vulnerable children, gift giving, seeking isolation with children, and grooming behaviors are all known signs. Any case is going to have applicable signs and facilitators and child advocates need to be prepared to apply them to messaging.
- One adult who knows the signs and how to react to protect a child could have made all the difference.
- This is why adults need to be trained to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. This tragedy shows us that we all need to know how to protect kids from abuse. Incidents like this make us feel helpless, but there is something we can do. We now have an opportunity to start talking about this issue, come together as a community, and take measures to ensure this doesn't happen again



THE IMPACT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face, with the most serious array of consequences. But as a society, we often lack the ability to recognize it. We don't know enough about child sexual abuse to prevent it, or respond when it occurs.

Research shows that people who are sexually violated as children are far more likely to experience psychological problems often lasting into adulthood, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, substance abuse, relationship problems, and suicide.

*Child sexual abuse is not the problem of one socio-economic status, culture, race, religion, or gender. It impacts **every** community and **every** person across the globe.*



ECONOMIC

Fact:

The CDC estimates that the U.S. spends billions annually for the costs of child abuse.

Fact:

These expenses are largely paid for by the public sector - the taxpayer.

Fact:

Child sexual abuse has lasting societal consequences. The costs impact multiple sectors including healthcare, criminal justice, child welfare, and special education.

**THE AVERAGE
LIFETIME COST OF
SEXUAL ABUSE PER
VICTIM IS \$210,012.**



SOCIETAL

Fact:

Delinquency and crime, often stemming from substance abuse, are more prevalent in adolescents with a history of child sexual abuse.

Fact:

The risk of teen pregnancy is much higher for girls with a history of child sexual abuse.

Fact:

Academic problems in childhood are a common symptom of sexual abuse.

**39% OF 7 TO 12
YEAR-OLD GIRLS WITH
A HISTORY OF CHILD
SEXUAL ABUSE HAVE
ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES.**



HEALTH

Fact:

Mental health problems are a common long-term consequence of child sexual abuse.

Fact:

Child sexual abuse is also associated with physical health problems in adulthood.

Fact:

Substance abuse problems beginning in childhood or adolescence are some of the most common consequences of child sexual abuse.

Fact:

Obesity and eating disorders are more common in women who have a history of child sexual abuse.

**OVER 70% OF MALE
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
SURVIVORS SEEK TREATMENT
FOR ISSUES LIKE SUBSTANCE
ABUSE, SUICIDAL THOUGHTS,
AND ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.**



WHAT A COMMUNITY CAN DO

Promote Prevention Training

Increase Participation in *Stewards of Children*®

Your community is lucky to have a facilitator who can provide immediate help and guidance on how to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. Make sure community leaders are aware of existing efforts and encourage them to all take *Stewards of Children*®.

Create a *Stewards of Children* Training Pledge Drive

Set a goal and solicit pledges from youth serving organizations to train their staff and volunteers within a certain period of time. If an initiative is well under way in your community, you might be willing to consider holding a Prevent-a-thon. Prevent-a-thon is month-long media event that drives people to take action to protect the children in their lives. It mobilizes the community to address the issue of child sexual abuse.

[Find out more here: D2L.org/Preventathon](http://D2L.org/Preventathon)

Insist on Training and Policy

Establishing a prevention education program is one of the most empowering things a community can do when responding to a crisis that has people feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Prevention education gives the community immediate tools that can be used to take action. Requiring schools and youth serving organizations to mandate training for all staff and volunteers that work with children is a great start, as well as instituting policies that will promote safe behaviors.

Plan a Prevent Now! Workshop in Your Community

This workshop teaches people how to create a strategy for a community prevention initiative, conduct community awareness meetings, build a coalition, and develop funding strategies. Ideally an organization has committed a full time Prevention Specialist and is willing to take a lead role in driving a community initiative. It costs \$125 to attend a Prevent Now! Workshop. [Find out more here: D2L.org/PreventNow](http://D2L.org/PreventNow)

Fundraise

Help drive prevention in your community by providing or raising funds. Check out the Funder's Strategies information page on the Darkness to Light website for ideas. [Find out more here: D2L.org/Funders](http://D2L.org/Funders)

Create Awareness and Get People Involved

Help create awareness in your community. Once people understand the problem they are more inspired to be part of the solution.

Distribute Brochures

Darkness to Light has brochures and tip sheets available for purchase in the online D2L store, or for free download on our resources webpage. Help spread the word by distributing brochures to parents via youth serving organizations, pediatricians, churches, and any other organization or institutions that work with children. [Find out more here: D2L.org/Resources](http://D2L.org/Resources)

Partner in Prevention Distinction

Encourage organizations to qualify for the D2L Partner in Prevention distinction. This distinction requires training of staff and volunteers, implementation of child protection policy, and background screening of all staff and volunteers. Encourage youth serving organization to apply and also spread the word to make parents aware of this distinction as they evaluate programs/places for their children. [Find out more here: www.D2L.org/Partner](http://www.D2L.org/Partner)

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HOW TO TALK TO KIDS

The news coverage and attention of a high profile child sexual abuse case is a great door opener for parents and caregivers to talk with kids about sexual abuse. If your child or teen has seen or heard some of the attention given, it can be an opportunity to gently ask your child how much they know about sexual abuse.

Asking questions in a conversational and genuine way can help you know where the gaps are in your child's understanding and knowledge. It will also give you an opportunity to clear up any misinformation. Approach as a discussion rather than an interrogation and be supportive and prepared to listen. You can open a dialogue with any of the following questions that feel right to you. Then, let the child or teen be your guide. You're your tone supportive and encouraging. Just one or two may be all you need for a robust conversation!

Also, visit Tips for Talking to Children to help guide you on some of the answers to questions that may arise. [Find out more here: D2L.org/TalkingTips](http://D2L.org/TalkingTips)

- What do you know about child sexual abuse? (or some version of this question that works for your child) – fill in the gaps.
- How do you feel on behalf of the kids who were abused?
- How do you feel about the adults who covered it up?
- What do you think they should have done?
- Do you think all this attention or news coverage is important?
- What would you do if you thought one of your friends was being abused?
- How can kids help other kids who are being bullied or abused? (tell an adult who can help)
- Do you know of anything like this happening at your school?
- Is there anything else you want to talk with me about? -Or- do you have any questions you want to ask me?



PUBLICIZING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children™

The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children™ is an introductory guide for responsible adults interested in the prevention of child sexual abuse. *The 5 Steps* outline Darkness to Light's core principles for preventing, recognizing, and reacting responsibly to child sexual abuse, and form the framework for the adult training program, *Stewards of Children®*.

Find out more here: D2L.org/5Steps

What You Can Do:

5 things everyone can do to be an advocate for child sexual abuse prevention.

Find out more here: D2L.org/WhatYouCanDo

Darkness to Light Resources and Tip Sheets

Visit www.D2L.org to download PDF tools and tips that will help you and your community learn more about child sexual abuse and actions you can take to prevent an incident in the future. Resources include:

- Community Based Prevention
- Educational Reform
- Healthy Sexual Development
- Tips for Talking to Your Kids
- Becoming a Partner in Prevention
- Prevent Now! Workshops
- Resources for YSO's
- Role of Educators
- Role of Schools
- Statistics including:
 - Circumstances
 - Magnitude of the Problem
 - Perpetrators
 - Signs of Child Sexual Abuse
 - Risk Factors
 - Short and Long Term Consequences

National Resources

There are many resources available if you are looking for help about how to deal with a situation.

Find out more here: D2L.org/GetHelp

