Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Connect the Dots!
Child Abuse Prevention Day Mini Conference

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• Strengths-based approach
  ✓ Family Support Principles
  ✓ Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework

• Funding
  ✓ 11 million for primary prevention programs:
    ➢ Home visiting, family resource centers, parenting education, & fatherhood

• Evaluation
  ✓ Currently completing a randomized control study of home visiting

• Education
  ✓ Training and advocacy
Just the Facts
Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

• 1 in 5 girls & 1 in 10 boys are sexually abused before they are 18
  (CDC)

• 1 out of every 10 students are victims of sexual misconduct by an
  educator (US Dept of Education)

• Research shows toxic stress damages developing brain
  architecture which can lead to lifelong problems in learning,
  behavior, and physical/mental illness.
  (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University)
• ACE study done by the CDC found childhood experience of abuse increased adverse health outcomes

• Children who have been sexually abused are 2.5 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 3.6 times more likely to develop drug addictions (Child Help)
Pedophiles

- 90% of children (under age 12) know the offender.
  *(US Dept of Justice ’97, Finkelhor, UNH, 2001)*

- Pedophile has an average of 244 victims over the course of their life - majority began offending as juvenile
  *(National Institute of Mental Health)*

- 66% of male juvenile sex offenders indicated they had been physically (19%) and/or sexually abused (49%).
After sexual abuse has happened:

**We can punish**
- Changing or eliminating civil statutes so victims can sue in civil court
- Sex Offender registries
- Increase sentencing of convicted pedophiles

**Improve treatment/oversight including**
- Court ordered lie detectors on regular basis
- Long term probation with ankle bracelets as needed
We can treat and support victims

Incredible work of child advocacy centers

Increase access to trained mental health specialists

Support for parents and family members
What is our reaction when we read about a case of child sexual abuse in the newspaper or on TV?
Denial

Not in our town, not in my neighborhood or school and certainly never in my family.
• Pedophiles count on that: they fly under our radar

• Kids counts on us – this is an adult responsibility

• You would not be surprised to find a drunk in a bar, so why are you surprised to find a pedophile where kids are?
The challenge
What can we do as professionals within our agencies, in our churches, in our roles as volunteers, and as parents?
Need for prevention: *Moving Upstream*
Putting **multiple barriers** up to keep pedophiles from accessing children
Massachusetts Model

Ensuring that all child serving agencies have:

– Clear reporting protocol & structure within the organization
– Code of conduct & safe environment policies
– Staff Training
– Parent Training
– Training children once everyone else is on board!
Massachusetts Model

Designing and Implementing a School Reporting Protocol

2nd Edition
Code of Conduct

• minimize situations where a child is alone with an adult

• No acceptance of gifts without a parents knowledge and permission, identify what kinds of touch (high five, pats on the back) that are OK and those (tickling, wrestling, piggy back rides) that are not.
Safe environment policy

• Secure areas not used for program purposes:
  – Lock closets and store rooms, windows in doors, bright lighting.
  – Reviewing transportation policies
  – Review transportation policies
  – Privacy when in the bathroom or changing clothes
  – Access control: policies & procedures for who is allowed in and under what circumstances
Components of manual also include:

- Signs & symptoms pedophiles
- Signs & symptoms victims
- Creating a team: reporting to child protection
Staff Training

- Screening at hiring
- Keeping it on everyone’s radar screen
Talking about Touching

• Implemented across various child serving agencies

• Developmentally appropriate and evidenced based safety curriculum for kids.

• Experience working with the RCAB
Training Parents

Take it to where they are!
Now...

Train kids
Resources

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations – CDC
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/PreventingChildAbuse.html

Committee for Children – Talking About Touching
www.cfchildren.org

Massachusetts Children’s Trust Fund
www.mctf.org

One Tough Job Parenting Website
www.onetoughjob.org