

# Preventing Child Maltreatment in Youth Serving Organizations

*A Bibliography*



**August 2022**

***Local Service.  
Global Leadership.***



210 Pratt Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801  
256-533-(KIDS) 5437 • [nationalcac.org](http://nationalcac.org)



© 2016, 2019, 2022 National Children’s Advocacy Center. All rights reserved.

Preferred citation: National Children’s Advocacy Center. (2022). Preventing Child Maltreatment in Youth Serving Organizations: A Bibliography. Huntsville, AL: Author.

This project was supported by a grant awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

## **Scope**

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts to publications on prevention of child maltreatment in youth serving organizations. Publications covering issues of abuse within religiously affiliated organizations are not included. International publications are not included. This list of publications was compiled through a multi-step process that included searches of numerous bibliographic databases and reputable organizational websites, followed by division of publications as religiously affiliated, international, non-religiously affiliated, education affiliated, and other. A preliminary list was compiled including U.S.-only based publications covering non-religious affiliated organizations. This list was then divided into 1) empirical literature on prevention strategies and 2) general publications related to description and prevalence of the problem. This bibliography lists the remaining prevention research publications. A plethora of literature and resources without empirical research for support exists. Most of these publications offer recommendations based upon experience, yet without empirical evidence of their efficacy. The relatively few research publications listed here support four tenets of prevention: training, screening, monitoring and supervision, and response.

## **Organization**

Publications are listed in date-descending order. Author abstracts are provided unless otherwise stated.

## **Disclaimer**

This bibliography was prepared by the Digital Information Librarian of the National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) for the purpose of research and education, and for the convenience of our readers. The NCAC is not responsible for the availability or content of cited resources. The NCAC does not endorse, warrant or guarantee the information, products, or services described or offered by the authors or organizations whose publications are cited in this bibliography. The NCAC does not warrant or assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed in documents cited here. Points of view presented in cited resources are those of the authors, and do not necessarily coincide with those of the National Children's Advocacy Center.

# Preventing Child Maltreatment in Youth Serving Organizations

## A Bibliography to the Research

Assini-Meytin, L. C., Kaufman, K. L., Mathews, B., Palmer, D. A., Ingram, M., & Letourneau, E. J. (2021). Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse: Organizational efforts. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 112*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104892>

Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains an ongoing threat to the wellbeing of children who might be victimized, to the liberty of individuals who might engage in abusive behavior, and to the reputations and livelihood of organizations in which abuse might occur. In the U.S., millions of children participate in youth-serving organizations (YSOs), and it is known that a proportion of CSA occurs in these settings. Despite the severity of these threats, there is little knowledge of the steps that organizations take to prevent and respond to CSA. Our study aimed to index current measures to prevent and respond to CSA in organizational settings, using four of the largest U.S.-based YSOs as exemplars. In partnership with our partner YSOs, we completed a qualitative analysis of 74 organizational documents including written policies, codes of conduct, trainings, and other documents that formalize these four organizations' current CSA prevention and intervention efforts. These organizations collectively implement hundreds of distinct measures aimed at preventing, detecting, and responding to CSA. These measures were categorized under eight overarching themes, including: overall commitment to child safety, code of conduct, training and education, assessment, implementation and monitoring, screening and hiring, reporting and responding to child sexual abuse, youth problem sexual behavior, and boundaries for teen leaders and young adult staff. Findings from the current study, outlining key prevention and policy areas undertaken by participating YSOs, offer a starting point for discussion about core elements needed to keep children safe from sexual abuse in YSO settings.

Finch, M., Featherston, R., Chakraborty, S., Bjørndal, L., Mildon, R., Albers, B., ... & Shlonsky, A. (2021). Interventions that address institutional child maltreatment: An evidence and gap map. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 17(1), e1139. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1139>  
[Full text](#)

Abel, G. G., Jordan, A., Harlow, N., & Hsu, Y. S. (2019). Preventing child sexual abuse: Screening for hidden child molesters seeking jobs in organizations that care for children. *Sexual Abuse*, 31(6), 662-683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063218793634>

Approximately 10% of children and adolescents are sexually abused by adults caring for them outside the home. The current study tested the validity and reliability of a child protection screen to identify job applicants who pose a sexual risk to children. The screen uses three separate measures. In combination, they attempt to identify two types of sexually problematic job applicants: hidden abusers and people with cognitive distortions that encourage child sexual boundary violations by themselves or tolerate them by others. The high specificity (97.8% for males and 98.7% for females) favored the high number of job applicants and volunteers who have not crossed sexual boundaries with children. The study included over 19,000 participants, and the screen correctly identified 77% of the men and over 72% of the women who posed a sexual risk. The test-retest correlation was statistically significant at  $r(121) = .83$ , and the screening methodology is valid and reliable. By identifying most of the job applicants who are hiding their history of sexually abusing a child or hiding their belief that adult-child sex causes no harm from the organizations they are attempting to join, this new preemployment screen methodology can help child-centered organizations protect children and adolescents in their care.

Lundberg, A., & Dangel, R. F. (2019). Using root cause analysis and occupational safety research to prevent child sexual abuse in schools. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(2), 187-199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2018.1494238>

Significant progress has been made in the past two decades understanding how child molesters gain access to children and molest them while manipulating others to not get caught. However, incidents of child sexual abuse in schools by educators, and by other children, continue. This manuscript suggests that a comprehensive solution involves two components: (1) using root cause analysis methodology to systematically identify and integrate repetitive causes; (2) to use the

findings from voluminous occupational safety research focusing on low-frequency but high-intensity events. Additionally, this manuscript describes eight organizational operations and practices that may reduce the risk of sexual abuse of children by educators or peers in a school setting. These findings were based on existing recommendations and on root cause analysis of thousands of incidents in schools and other youth serving organizations. Finally, the manuscript discusses how a framework drawn from occupational safety research can help schools and other youth serving organizations create environments that will help to create safe environments. Authors have used both components in working with thousands of organizations including faith-based, independent, and urban independent school districts, youth development programs, social service agencies, camps and so on serving diverse populations in 11 countries.

McKibbin, G. (2017). Preventing harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual exploitation for children & young people living in residential care: A scoping review in the Australian context. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 82, 373-382.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.10.008>

Harmful Sexual Behavior and Child Sexual Exploitation are problems of significant proportion for children & young people living in out-of-home care. The aim of this review was to conduct a scoping exercise of the evidence about preventing these problems with the intent of summarising and disseminating knowledge to policy-makers, practitioners and researchers. Five electronic databases were searched in November and December 2016, including: PsycINFO; Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts; SocINDEX; Web of Science; and Education Resource Information Centre. The search was guided by the research question: What is known about preventing Harmful Sexual Behavior and Child Sexual Exploitation for children & young people living in residential out-of-home care settings? Twenty papers were included in the review, including: seven peer-reviewed journal articles; three reports for government; two presentation transcripts; two literature reviews; one qualitative research report; one report for a government inquiry; one submission to a government inquiry; one consultation paper for a government inquiry; one guideline; and one educational resource. Three major thematic categories were identified in the evidence: (i) constructing educative interventions for children & young people and workers; (ii) targeting grooming and problematic sexual behavior; and (iii) providing a holistic response and a way out. The review revealed that the current prevention response to Harmful Sexual Behavior and Child



Sexual Exploitation for children & young people living in residential care is under-developed. Promising program, service or practice elements relating to the prevention of Harmful Sexual Behavior and Child Sexual Exploitation were identified and three interventions suggested for future prevention efforts.

Rheingold, A. A., Zajac, K., Chapman, J. E., Patton, M., de Arellano, M., Saunders, B., & Kilpatrick, D. (2015). Child sexual abuse prevention training for childcare professionals: An independent multi-site randomized controlled trial of stewards of children. *Prevention Science, 16*(3), 374-385.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-014-0499-6>  
[Full text](#)

Given the significant rates and deleterious consequences of childhood sexual abuse (CSA), identifying effective primary prevention approaches is a clear priority. There is a growing awareness that childcare professionals (e.g., teachers, childcare personnel, clergy) are in a unique position to engage in prevention efforts due to high accessibility to children and expertise in child development. However, CSA prevention programs targeting childcare professionals have received insufficient attention. The goal of this study was to conduct an independent multi-site controlled evaluation of an existing CSA prevention program, Stewards of Children, offered through both in-person and web-based formats. This study included 352 childcare professionals recruited from children's advocacy centers across three states. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) in-person training, (2) web-based training, or (3) waitlist control. Dependent variables included CSA knowledge, CSA attitudes, and self-reported CSA preventive behaviors. Results indicated that Stewards impacted knowledge, attitudes, and preventive behaviors. No differences were found between training modalities (i.e., in-person versus web-based) on knowledge and preventive behaviors. Results indicate that brief trainings for childcare professionals may impact CSA prevention efforts.

Abel, G. G., Wiegel, M., Jordan, A., Harlow, N., Hsu, Y. S., & Martinez, M. (2012). Development and validation of classification models to identify hidden child molesters applying to child service organizations. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(7), 1378-1389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.03.017>

Organizations caring for children sometimes unknowingly accept hidden child molesters as staff or volunteers because they have no reliable way to identify these individuals. The goal of the

present study was to develop and validate a screening methodology to identify individuals who have a higher likelihood of having sexually touched minors (17 years of age or younger) in the past. Long term studies of untreated adults who have sexually abused children in the past have found them to have a high rate of continuing to abuse children, ranging from 17% to 37%. Currently, the most common method of screening for child sexual abusers is to use criminal background checks. However, studies have shown that criminal background checks identify less than 1% of candidates as having sexual offense histories against either adults or children. This new classification methodology was designed to improve on this by accurately identifying a larger percentage of applicants who may present a risk to the children served by these organizations. In developing these models, one major challenge was creating models with a high specificity to correctly identify over 90% of adults in the population who do not molest, while retaining high sensitivity to identify child sexual abusers who conceal to gain access to children. To develop and validate a child sexual abuse prevention screen to identify child sexual abusers hidden among applicants seeking jobs or volunteer positions working with children, the present study used classification models derived from linear regression analyses to discriminate between samples of concealing child sexual abusers and general population volunteers who had never been accused of sexual misconduct. Researchers developed separate models for men and women. For the male classification model, the specificity was 90.3% and the bootstrapped sensitivity was 51.0%. For the female classification model, the specificity was 90.0% and the sensitivity was 37.1%. Thus, this classification model was able to correctly identify approximately 50% of men and 40% of women who have sexually abused a child in the past. Compared to the less than 1% identified by criminal background checks, this classification methodology has the potential of substantially increasing a child service organization's ability to identify individuals who have the highest probability of having sexually abused children in the past and are concealing from the organization they are attempting to join. © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.



Wurtele, S. K. (2012). Preventing the sexual exploitation of minors in youth-serving organizations. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 2442-2453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.09.009>

This article discusses child sexual abuse (CSA) by staff members in youth-serving organizations (YSOs) including schools, residential treatment and correction facilities, scouting, clubs, faith centers, and sports leagues. Over the last ten years there have been highly publicized reports of adults in positions of authority, such as teachers, coaches, and ministers, sexually exploiting youth under their care. Using an ecological perspective, the author suggests preventing institutional sexual exploitation by addressing such macrosystem factors as national and state policies and legislation, and at the organizational level by implementing risk-management strategies and by training staff in how to have close connections with youth while avoiding sexual misconduct. Providing training, monitoring, and supervision for youth-serving staff to help them maintain appropriate professional boundaries will not only help protect the integrity of the agency but most important, may help prevent institutional child sexual exploitation.

Skarbek, D., Hahn, K., & Parrish, P. (2009). Stop sexual abuse in special education: An ecological model of prevention and intervention strategies for sexual abuse in special education. *Sexuality and Disability, 27*(3), 155-164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-009-9127-y>

Children with disabilities are 3.4 times more likely to be sexually abused than their nondisabled peers. Moreover, the abuse will likely be committed by someone they know and trust such as a parent, sibling, teacher, day care provider, priest, or coach. Given this, it is critical that schools implement sexual abuse prevention and intervention programs for children with disabilities. Prevention and intervention programs based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model infused with the three categories of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary as espoused by the Centers for Disease Control is proposed.

Webster, M. W., & Whitman, J. (2008). Who's lending a hand? A national survey of nonprofit volunteer screening practices. *The National Center for Victims of Crime, Washington, DC (2008, April)*.

The vast majority of the reporting organizations indicated that they conduct some form of screening of incoming volunteers, but not all of these organizations conduct thorough screening. The majority of screening organizations conduct an interview of volunteers, but fewer organizations check references, and even fewer conduct full background checks. Organizations with a larger volunteer base were more likely to conduct interviews, reference checks, and background checks. Most organizations that conduct background checks submit volunteers to a name-based criminal records check but use other databases, such as sex offender registries and child and adult protection services. Fingerprint and credit history databases are used far less often. Only about half of the organizations that conduct background checks on prospective volunteers do so in more than one State or use national databases. In addition, the majority of organizations never re-screen volunteers after the initial screening. The majority of organizations reported that they disqualify prospective volunteers for an arrest or conviction for a crime, and the majority of organizations indicated they would disqualify a prospective volunteer for a child-abuse or elder-abuse report. Most organizations do not disqualify persons for having a poor credit history. The survey was conducted between February and April 2007. The organizations surveyed represented the categories of tax-exempt entities deemed most likely to engage volunteers and work with vulnerable clients. 7 tables, 4 figures, and appended description of methodology.