



Preventing Child Maltreatment in Youth Serving Organizations

A Bibliography

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**Championing and Strengthening the
Global Response to Child Abuse**

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Scope

This bibliography provides empirical literature on prevention of child maltreatment in youth serving organizations. Publications covering issues of abuse within religiously affiliated organizations are not included. See [Child Abuse Within Religious Institutions: A Bibliography](#)

Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are arranged in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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A Bibliography

Arnold, S., & Jeglic, E. L. (2024). Stereotypes and unconscious bias in institutional child sexual abuse: Barriers to identification, reporting and prevention. *Child Abuse Review*, 33(2), e2865. DOI:10.1002/car.2865

Child sexual abuse within institutional settings has been a major concern for governments around the world for many years. Consequently, prevention policies have been developed, and institutional child abuse laws have been strengthened in many jurisdictions. Legislation is important to prevent reoffending, however, the majority of childhood sexual abuse remains unreported and undetected. While awareness of the failings of institutions to properly identify and respond to child abuse has grown in recent years, barriers to reporting institutional abuse remain understudied, impacting the ability to prevent abuse. One possible reason that prevents workers from identifying and reporting child sexual abuse is that their judgements are vulnerable to stereotypes and unconscious biases about who perpetrates and is victimised by sexual crimes and what constitutes warning signs of sexually abusive behaviours. Research in psychology provides key insights into human reasoning processes that can lead to bias, so workers fail to identify, respond and prevent grooming and child abuse in an organisational context. This paper reviews what is known about the development and maintenance of stereotypes and unconscious bias, their role in institutional sexual abuse, and concludes with a discussion of measures that can be taken to mitigate unconscious bias to prevent child abuse.

Fix, R. L., & Letourneau, E. J. (2024). Examining and comparing the first public olympic and competitive sports misconduct registry with the national sex offense registry. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 1-16. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2024.2359451

In 2017, the U.S. Center for SafeSport launched the first public disciplinary sports registry listing individuals accused of engaging in harmful behavior against child and adult athletes. Our study reviews information from 1,161 individuals on SafeSport's sports registry. Of the individuals on the sports registry, 22% were concurrently listed on the national registry for sexual offenses. Relative to individuals listed only on the sports registry, those on both registries were 4.5 and 1.4 times more likely to have sexual misconduct allegations and allegations involving a child, respectively. Of those on both registries, 31% were on the national registry approximately seven years before appearing on the sports registry. We discuss whether and how public registries represent effective strategies for crime prevention.

McCain, J. L., Herbst, J. H., Merrill-Francis, M., Willis, L. A., Miedema, S. S., & Shortt, J. W. (2024). Review of policies and practices to prevent technology-facilitated child sexual abuse within youth-serving organizations in the United States. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 33(5), 545-564. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2024.2381457

Technology-facilitated child sexual abuse (TF-CSA), or child sexual abuse that occurs online or through electronic communication, is a preventable public health problem that can be addressed within youth-serving organizations (YSOs). This study is a review of a purposive sample of organizational policies and practices designed to prevent TF-CSA collected from 13 national and local YSOs in the United States. Documents were coded to identify practices to prevent TF-CSA related to YSO activities or YSO staff, volunteers, or participants. Qualitative analysis indicated that YSOs included seven common practices to prevent TF-CSA in their documents. These practices included transparent electronic communication between youth and YSO staff; codes of conduct and online behavior agreements related to youth; monitoring the YSO's online presence; parental controls for youth online activity; safety behaviors for online activity for staff, parents, and youth;

parent and youth trainings for youth online engagement and prevention of TF-CSA; and practices to address staff policy violations. Most prevention practices documented by YSOs identified in this study are consistent with emerging literature on TF-CSA prevention. Key gaps include protections for youth from groups inequitably burdened by TF-CSA and evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of practices in preventing TF-CSA across settings and populations.

Robertson, A. L., Harris, D. A., & Karstedt, S. (2023). "It's a preventable type of harm": Evidence-based strategies to prevent sexual abuse in schools. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 145, 106419. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106419

The last two decades have seen global public recognition of the scale and impact of adult-perpetrated institutional child sexual abuse. A sizeable body of knowledge about generalized safeguarding measures has since been generated to inform organizations' prevention efforts. Apparent in the extant literature, however, is a notable lack of evidence-based and context-specific prevention strategies targeting perpetration in distinct institutional environments. This absence extends to educational settings where most reported contemporary cases occur or originate. The recommendations outlined in this article contribute to this gap. Derived from empirical findings establishing the role of context-specific rather than person-specific factors, a range of prevention strategies framed by Situational Crime Prevention are proposed for secondary educational settings. These recommendations are supplemented by the unique insights of interviewed experts with specialist professional knowledge. Recommendations center around targeting features of the environment such as high-risk locations, available guardians, and intimacy-promoting situations available in educational contexts. Taken together, this robust prevention and control agenda can create conditions for safer educational environments.

Lockitch, J., Rayment-McHugh, S., & McKillop, N. (2022). Why didn't they intervene? Examining the role of guardianship in preventing institutional child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 31(6), 649–671. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2022.2133042

In recent years, the failings of institutions to safeguard children from sexual abuse have been brought to light through investigations and commissions of inquiries such as Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The role of adults as guardians, to protect children within these institutions, has been afforded particular scrutiny, highlighting past ineffective and harmful intervention and responses to abuse, and even inaction. Despite this attention, limited research to date has explored the barriers underpinning guardianship behavior in this setting. Enhanced understanding of the potential barriers to guardianship is key for informing improved guardianship behavior in the future. Using data from Australia's Royal Commission, this study applies Reynald's (2010) model of capable guardianship to investigate dimensions of guardianship in youth-serving institutional settings. Three discrete settings were examined: outside school hours care, schools, and sporting institutions. Results support the utility of Reynald's (2010) model for advancing knowledge about guardianship behavior in youth-serving institutions, providing valuable lessons for future policy directions, to enhance safeguarding practices.

Milroy, J. J., Hanna, K., VandeLinde, T., Lee, D. S., Kaufman, K. L., Raj, A., ... & Kyler-Yano, J. (2022). Prevention of sexual violence in sport: A socioecological review. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(13–14), NP10618–NP10641. DOI:10.1177/08862605211067003

Sexual violence in sport is prevalent and represents a serious public health concern. The social-ecological model for health promotion has been used successfully as a framework to identify individual-to-policy level factors aimed at health promotion or disease prevention. The purpose of this review was to examine both published and non-published (publicly available) SVP efforts conducted within the context of sport and make recommendations for future practice. Grey literature search methods were utilized to conduct a review of publicly available documents. This included (a) a comprehensive

Google search using unique search terms that would identify SVP efforts within sport settings and (b) a review of the publicly accessible websites identified in the previous step. Following the grey literature search, and using the SVP practices identified in step one, we conducted a supplementary literature search using scientific publication search engines to identify whether the SVP practices identified in step one had associated peer-reviewed publications. Finally, we assessed various characteristics of each SVP practice including the target population, age range of intended participants, and whether the SVP had associated peer review publications. This led to the identification of 35 unique SVP practices: 25 (71%) SVP practices were assigned to the Intrapersonal level, 6 (17%) were assigned to the Interpersonal level, 9 (26%) were assigned to the Organizational level, 3 (9%) were assigned to the Community, and 2 (6%) were assigned to the Policy level. This review uncovered several important findings including a lack of multi-level SVP practices within sport, a lack of SVP practices that target children, minimal programming aimed at specifically preventing perpetration, the need to elevate policy level action, and a lack of peer-reviewed literature. Ultimately findings suggest that sport organizations ought to prioritize sexual violence prevention using national organizations for guidance

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, 104892. DOI: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., Fiennes, C., Taylor, D. J. A., Schachtman, R., Yang, T., & Shlonsky, A. (2021). [Interventions that address institutional child maltreatment: An evidence and gap map](#). *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 17(1), e1139. DOI:10.1002/cl2.1139

The selection criteria were developed to identify finalised and ongoing overviews of reviews, systematic reviews and primary studies that reported on the effectiveness of interventions addressing child maltreatment (including sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and emotional abuse) within institutional settings. Eligible effectiveness study designs included: randomised controlled trials (RCTs), nonrandomised trials, controlled before-and-after studies and quasi-experimental studies. Reviews were eligible if they reported a systematic literature search strategy. This EGM has highlighted a substantial need for more high quality studies that evaluate interventions across a broader range of institutional contexts and maltreatment types. The current evidence base does not represent countries with large populations and the greatest incidence of child maltreatment. Few studies focussed on perpetrators or the organisational environment. Further evidence gaps were identified for interventions relating to disclosure, organisational responses and treatment, and few studies assessed interventions

targeting perpetrators' maltreatment behaviours, recidivism or desistence. Future studies should also include measure of programme implementation.

Darling, A. J., & Hackett, S. (2020). Situational factors in female-perpetrated child sexual abuse in organisations: Implications for prevention. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 26(1), 5-22. DOI:10.1080/13552600.2019.1695968

Despite increasing interest in child sexual abuse occurring in organisations, the perpetration of such abuse by females is largely ignored. This study examined situational factors in 136 cases of sexual abuse perpetrated by women working with children in the UK, Canada and the USA between 2000 and 2016. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis of court reports, professional regulator decisions, media reports and an online sentencing database was used, findings indicating that situational and contextual factors are highly relevant in perpetration. Much abuse occurs away from the organisational environment, particularly in perpetrators' homes and cars, and in virtual environments. However, it also occurs within organisations, generally in unsupervised areas, outside of operating hours and often during mentoring/tutoring or extra-curricular activities. Organisational and local culture can be a facilitator in this abuse and allow it to continue even when concerns are raised. Practical prevention measures are suggested to assist in reducing future abuse.

Krone, T., Spiranovic, C., Prichard, J., Watters, P., Wortley, R., Gelb, K., & Hunn, C. (2020). [Child sexual abuse material in child-centred institutions: Situational crime prevention approaches](#). *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 26(1), 91-110. DOI:10.1080/13552600.2019.1705925

This paper focuses on the potential for child-centred institutions to use situational crime prevention (SCP) strategies to prevent or reduce child sexual abuse material (CSAM) offending as a distinct form of child sexual abuse (CSA). We discuss the failure of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia to address the potential for CSAM offending to occur in child-centred institutions. Our

premise is that CSAM offending is markedly shaped by the situation in which it occurs, rather than by any pre-existing preparedness to offend sexually against children. In this context, SCP for CSAM offending must be considered as part of overall strategies to combat CSA in institutional settings. However, we acknowledge that effective implementation of SCP in this area is not straightforward. We consider some of the challenges in implementing SCP at an institutional level.

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. DOI: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. DOI: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. DOI: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. DOI:10.1007/s11121-014-0499-6

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. DOI: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.
DOI: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. DOI: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.

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.