

Child Abuse Awareness 101 For Homeschoolers

Attendee Packet

By Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out



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The Goal of This Program

The goal of *Child Abuse Awareness 101 for Homeschoolers* is simple:

To empower and equip you and your homeschool community with the information necessary to recognizing and fighting child abuse.

After taking this class, you should be able to do the following:

- 1) Define the major types of child abuse and neglect
- 2) Recognize the main warning signs of each major type of child abuse
- 3) Identify the characteristics of the average child abuser
- 4) Report child abuse to the proper authorities
- 5) Start making families and homeschooling communities safer
- 6) Engage in continuing education about child abuse prevention issues

Our awareness program begins with general issues — what the different types of child abuse are and the warning signs — and then looks at each major type of child abuse specifically: physical, sexual, neglect, and emotional. We also dedicate entire sections to sibling and institutional abuse. We believe that any adequate curriculum about child abuse prevention needs to shine a light on all abuse types, not just the most visible types of sexual or physical abuse. Since children will often experience more than one type of abuse at a time, a broad-based and interconnected approach to abuse prevention is absolutely necessary.

Thank you very much for your interest in learning about child abuse and how we as homeschooling students, parents, and alumni can work together to prevent it. This is a vitally important issue to tackle. We appreciate your willingness to do so. And we hope that this curriculum contributes to making your homeschooling community a safer and more nurturing place for everyone.

If you have any concerns, questions, or suggestions for HARO, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our website is www.hareachingout.org. We'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

R.L. Stollar
Executive Director
Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out

Introduction: Why Homeschoolers Need to Take Child Abuse Seriously

This is the starting point for making homeschooling better and safer for future generations: the simple acknowledgement that child abuse happens in homeschooling communities.

What is Child Abuse?

_____ lays the groundwork for State laws on child maltreatment by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect.

Major types of child abuse

Most States recognize the four major types of maltreatment:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is _____ physical injury

Physical discipline, such as _____, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's

_____.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is defined by _____ as “the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.”

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse (or _____) is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth.

Emotional abuse is almost always _____ when other types of maltreatment are identified.

10 Warning Signs of Child Abuse

1. Sudden changes in _____.
2. Fears of _____.
3. Unexplained _____.
4. Age-inappropriate _____.
5. Physical _____.
6. Changes in _____.
7. Lack of personal _____.
8. Assuming _____ responsibilities.
9. Habit _____.
10. Disclosing _____.

Understanding Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the _____ most common type of child abuse.

Children with _____ are particularly at risk of physical abuse.

Defining physical abuse

Under federal standards, physical discipline (such as spanking or paddling) is currently _____ considered abuse.

Characteristics of physical abusers

Just like child sexual predators, perpetrators of physical abuse against children transcend any one _____ group.

Having a _____ - _____ increases the risk of a child being physically abused.

Child *physical* abuse is more often perpetrated by _____.

Male perpetrators of physical abuse are more predominant where _____ attitudes prevail.

Warning signs of physical abuse

Physical signs that a child may be experiencing physical abuse include (but are not limited to):

- _____ injuries (such injuries may not show outward signs, but symptoms like vomiting or fever could indicate such injuries exist)

- Abnormal loss of _____
- Bruises and welts, especially when in _____ and/or of varying colors (in which case repeated abuse may be a factor)
- Burns and scalds that show the markings of items used to inflict them (such as a cigarette or iron)
- Fractures or swollen joints in children of 2 years or younger
- History of _____ injuries
- Injuries caused by shaking, such as brain or eye damage

Behavioral warning signs of physical abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Child does not register _____ when physically hurt
- Child offers bizarre explanations of physical injuries
- Child wears clothing _____ for the season (for example, long-sleeved shirts on warm days to hide injuries)
- Child displays unusual fear of physical interaction with adults
- Child becomes disruptive or destructive towards self and/or others
- Child _____ into age-inappropriate behavior, such as wetting the bed or sucking one's thumb
- Child becomes increasingly passive or withdrawn
- Child refuses to undress for necessary activities such as physical exercise activities or hospital physical exams

Behavioral warning signs for parents who physically abuse include (but are not limited to):

- Child’s parent gives inadequate or unbelievable excuses for injuries such as “Child bruises easily” or “Child is prone to accidents”
- Child’s parent does not seek, or delays seeking, _____ treatment of child’s injuries
- Child’s parent continually switches what doctor or hospital the child is taken to
- Child’s parent appears _____ about the child’s injuries
- Child’s parent constantly refers to child as “bad” or “evil”
- Child’s parent is _____ or suspicious of social activities and other people

Preventing physical abuse

First, make it a community habit to always _____ physical abuse.

Second, offer classes in your homeschooling community to help parents learn healthy _____ skills.

Third, encourage parents and families in your homeschooling community to learn alternatives to _____ discipline.

Fourth, create a no-shame environment where parents or families who are struggling can come forward and ask for _____.

Fifth, teach parents and families *how to cope with* _____.

Sixth, _____ your community about child abuse and neglect.

Seventh, teach your community the right way to respond to a child who comes forward with an _____ disclosure.

Neglect: A Quieter Abuse

Neglect is the most _____ form of child abuse in the United States.

Numerous studies have linked early childhood neglect with the _____ of necessary growth hormones.

Defining neglect

In general, most states and organizations agree neglect consists of 4 categories:

- _____ neglect
- _____ neglect
- _____ neglect
- _____ neglect

Warning signs of neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when a child:

- Is extremely _____ and/or passive
- Displays random, undisciplined activity
- Is frequently _____ from school (in the case of homeschooling, your co-op or weekly homeschool park day)
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe _____

Consider the possibility of neglect when a parent or other adult caregiver:

- Appears to be indifferent to a child
- Is unable to show _____ for a child's age-appropriate needs
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Has either an infantile or _____ personality
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs
- Has both a large family and few _____ to meet that family's needs
- Displays either infrequent or predominantly negative communication with family
- Avoids being _____ in church or other formal organizations that could be support systems
- Went through a recent and significantly life-upsetting loss of income (e.g., recent unemployment of the family's main income-earner)

Characteristics of Child Sexual Predators

1. Child sexual predators are more likely to be...

- a. Married or formerly married
- b. Never married

2. The average child sexual predator is...

- a. Female
- b. Male

3. In their day-to-day lives, child sexual predators are more likely to identify as...

- a. Homosexual
- b. Heterosexual
- c. Bisexual

4. The average child sexual predator is more likely to molest...

- a. Boys
- b. Girls

5. Child sexual predators with the most number of victims each are more likely to molest...

- a. Boys
- b. Girls

c. Both boys and girls

6. The average child sexual predator is...

a. Religious

b. Not religious

7. The average child sexual predator targets the children of...

a. Strangers

b. Their own families and friends

Why We Need to Take Emotional Abuse Seriously

Emotional abuse gets consistently _____.

The American Academy of Pediatrics identified it as “the most challenging and _____ form of child abuse and neglect.”

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines this type of abuse in the following way: “*Psychological abuse is the systematic perpetration of malicious and explicit _____ acts against an intimate partner, child, or dependent adult.*”

Types of emotional abuse

Examples of child emotional abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Deliberately trying to scare or _____ a child
- Deliberately ignoring a child
- _____ to injure, disfigure, or kill a child
- Emotionally withdrawing from a child as a form of punishment
- Damaging a child’s _____ (clothes, toys, school supplies, etc.)
- Preventing a child from having social interactions with friends
- Preventing a child from eating, drinking, or sleeping
- Threatening or physically harming a child’s pet
- Treating an adult child like a _____
- Making a child feel like the parent is always right and the child is always wrong

- Mocking a child's _____ levels
- Treating a child not as a separate person but instead as an extension of one's self

Sibling Abuse: The Unspoken Threat

Sibling violence is by far the most _____ form of family violence,

The rate of sibling incest may be _____ times the rate of parent-child sexual abuse.

Sibling abuse and homeschooling

Bullying is not unique to any particular _____ system.

Forcing siblings to spank each other can encourage _____ - _____ sexual behaviors

While sibling sexual abuse is more commonly perpetrated by a

_____ against a sister, it must be noted that siblings of the same gender can also abuse each other.

Warning signs of sibling abuse

If a sibling is being abused

- Child avoids _____ with sibling(s)
- Child fears being left alone with sibling(s)
- Child doesn't want to be at or go home
- Child acts out _____ in play
- Child has unexplained bruises, scrapes, or other injuries after hanging out with sibling(s)
- Child is overly compliant or withdrawn when interacting with sibling(s)

- Child's relationship with sibling(s) is entirely negative

If a sibling is an abuser

- Child always assumes the role of an _____ during playtime with sibling(s)
- Child seeks inappropriate sexual contact with sibling(s)
- Child demonstrates age-inappropriate _____ awareness and/or curiosity
- Child takes younger children or siblings to "secret" places or plays "secret" games with them
- Child displays increasingly rough behavior during playtime
- Child becomes violent towards pets or toys
- Child frequently seeks out the company of _____ children or siblings rather than peers
- Child intentionally ignores boundaries of other children or siblings, even when other children or siblings express dismay or resist
- Child views sexual images of other children on the Internet (or other places)
- Child _____ other children or siblings with attention or prizes in exchange for sexual contact

Responding to sibling abuse as a parent or caretaker

First, protect the _____ child.

Second, if the abuse is a criminal action, _____ it.

Third, get a _____ involved.

Fourth, consider where the child may have _____ the problematic behavior.

Fifth, make a _____ plan.

Sixth, communicate with other _____.

Seventh, do _____.

Eighth, consider how you can make your family _____.

Understanding Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is perpetrated by _____ entrusted with the care of children.

Types of institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is usually divided into 3 categories:

- _____ abuse
- _____ abuse
- _____ abuse

Warning signs of institutional abuse

- The institution and/or its staff members have received _____ allegations or complaints about abuse or neglect.
- The institution and/or its staff members isolate people from their family or community.
- The institution and/or its staff members always _____ the children or young adults in their care rather than examine institutional shortcomings.
- Children or young adults in the care of an institution exhibit signs of increased stress or trauma (such as eating disorders, self-injury, suicidal urges, etc.)
- The institution and/or its staff members treat adults like they are _____.
- The institution and/or its staff members treat children in harsh, startling, or punitive ways.

- The institution and/or its staff members frequently make _____ decisions.
- The institution and/or its staff members employ unreasonably strict or regimented schedules for daily activities such as meal times, bathroom use, and bathing/showering.
- The institution and/or its staff members show a lack of _____, dignity, choice, or respect for those entrusted to their care.
- The institution and/or its staff members create an unsafe or unhygienic environment.
- The institution and/or its staff members refuse to respect individuals' cultural, dietary, or religious backgrounds.

Preventing institutional abuse

First, _____ the organizations and institutions you are entrusting your children to *before you trust them*.

Second, always stay in _____ with your child when your child is in the institution's care.

Third, never _____ an organization or institution that does *not* let you stay in touch with your child.

Fourth, know the warning signs of institutional abuse (listed above) as well as the warning signs of child abuse and neglect in general.

Fifth, make sure the institutions _____ abuse and neglect.

Sixth, if you become aware of child abuse in an institution, report it to the proper authorities.

Seventh, if you become aware of child neglect in an institution, _____.

Reporting Abuse

Anyone and everyone is able to report suspected abuse or neglect. Doing so can not only save a child's life, but also get help for a family in need. There is a stigma in some homeschooling circles about social workers and child protective services, but these individuals and organizations exist to *help*. They can connect a well-meaning but neglectful family with resources to improve their parenting skills or economic situation; they can also rescue a child from cruel and horrible circumstances.

If you need help or counseling prior to reporting abuse, Childhelp is a national organization that can assist you. It offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls to them are confidential. You can call Childhelp at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) or visit their website at <http://www.childhelp.org/pages/hotline-home>.

If you are prepared and ready to report abuse, the following are websites and/or toll-free numbers for each U.S. state's specific agencies designated to receive and investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect:

Alabama

http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/Abuse_Neglect_Reporting.aspx

Alaska

Toll-Free:	(800) 478-4444
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<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/default.htm>

Arizona

Toll-Free:	(888) SOS-CHILD (888-767-2445)
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<https://www.azdes.gov/dcyf/cps/reporting.asp>

Arkansas

Toll-Free:	(800) 482-5964
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<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcfs/Pages/ChildProtectiveServices.aspx#Child>

California

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/PG20.htm>

Colorado

Local (toll):	(303) 866-5932
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<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDHS-Main/CBON/1251633944381>

Connecticut

TDD:	(800) 624-5518
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Toll-Free:	(800) 842-2288
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<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2556&Q=314388>

Delaware

Toll-Free:	(800) 292-9582
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<http://kids.delaware.gov/services/crisis.shtml>

District of Columbia

Local (toll):	(202) 671-SAFE (202-671-7233)
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<http://cfsa.dc.gov/service/report-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Florida

Toll-Free:	(800) 96-ABUSE (800-962-2873)
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<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/>

Georgia

<http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/child-abuse-neglect>

Hawaii

Local (toll):	(808) 832-5300
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<http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/ssd/home/child-welfare-services/>

Idaho

TDD:	(208) 332-7205
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Toll-Free:	(800) 926-2588
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<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Children/AbuseNeglect/ChildProtectionContactPhoneNumbers/tabid/475/Default.aspx>

Illinois

Toll-Free:	(800) 252-2873
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Local (toll):	(217) 524-2606
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<http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/child/index.shtml>

Indiana

Toll-Free:	(800) 800-5556
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<http://www.in.gov/dcs/2398.htm>

Iowa

Toll-Free:	(800) 362-2178
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<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Consumers/Test/ProtectiveServices.html>

Kansas

Toll-Free:	(800) 922-5330
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<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/Pages/Report-Abuse-or-Neglect.aspx>

Kentucky

Toll-Free:	(877) 597-2331
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<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/childsafety.htm>

Louisiana

Toll-Free:	(855) 452-5437
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<http://dss.louisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=109>

Maine

TTY:	(800) 963-9490
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Toll-Free:	(800) 452-1999
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<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/hotlines.htm>

Maryland

http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page_id=3973

Massachusetts

Toll-Free:	(800) 792-5200
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<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dcf/child-abuse-neglect/>

Michigan

Fax:	(616) 977-1154
	(616) 977-1158
Toll-Free:	(855) 444-3911

http://www.michigan.gov/dhs/0,1607,7-124-5452_7119—,00.html

Minnesota

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestRelease&dDocName=id_000152

Mississippi

Toll-Free:	(800) 222-8000
Local (toll):	(601) 359-4991

http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/fcs_prot.html

Missouri

Toll-Free:	(800) 392-3738
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<http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/rptcan.htm>

Montana

Toll-Free:	(866) 820-5437
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<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/cfsd/index.shtml>

Nebraska

Toll-Free:	(800) 652-1999
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http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Pages/children_family_services.aspx

Nevada

Toll-Free:	(800) 992-5757
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http://dcfs.state.nv.us/DCFS_ReportSuspectedChildAbuse.htm

New Hampshire

Toll-Free:	(800) 894-5533
Local (toll):	(603) 271-6556

<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/cps/contact.htm>

New Jersey

TDD:	(800) 835-5510
TTY:	(800) 835-5510
Toll-Free:	(877) 652-2873

<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/reporting/how/index.html>

New Mexico

Toll-Free:	(855) 333-7233
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<http://cyfd.org/child-abuse-neglect>

New York

TDD:	(800) 369-2437
Toll-Free:	(800) 342-3720
Local (toll):	(518) 474-8740

<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cps/>

North Carolina

<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/cps/index.htm>

North Dakota

<http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cps/#reporting>

Ohio

Toll-Free:	(855) 642-4453
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<http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm>

Oklahoma

Toll-Free:	(800) 522-3511
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<http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cps/default.htm>

Oregon

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/cps/report.shtml>

Pennsylvania

TDD:	(866) 872-1677
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Toll-Free:	(800) 932-0313
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<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childwelfareservices/calltoreportchildabuse!/index.htm>

Puerto Rico

Toll-Free:	(800) 981-8333
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Local (toll):	(787) 749-1333
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Spanish: <http://www2.pr.gov/agencias/adfan/Pages/AdministracionAuxiliardeProteccionSocial.aspx>

Rhode Island

Toll-Free:	(800) RI-CHILD (800-742-4453)
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http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/child_welfare/index.php

South Carolina

Local (toll):	(803) 898-7318
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<http://dss.sc.gov/content/customers/protection/cps/index.aspx>

South Dakota

<http://dss.sd.gov/cps/protective/reporting.asp>

Tennessee

Toll-Free:	(877) 237-0004
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<https://reportabuse.state.tn.us/>

Texas

Department of Family and Protective Services

Toll-Free:	(800) 252-5400
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https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_Us/report_abuse.asp

Spanish: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Espanol/default.asp>

Utah

Toll-Free:	(855) 323-3237
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<http://www.hsdcsf.utah.gov>

Vermont

After hours:	(800) 649-5285
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http://www.dcf.state.vt.us/fsd/reporting_child_abuse

Virginia

Toll-Free:	(800) 552-7096
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Local (toll):	(804) 786-8536
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<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/index.html>

Washington

TTY:	(800) 624-6186
Toll-Free:	(800) 562-5624
	(866) END-HARM (866-363-4276)

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/safety/abuseReport.asp?2>

West Virginia

Toll-Free:	(800) 352-6513
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http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/children_adult/cps/report.asp

Wisconsin

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/CPS/cpswimap.HTM>

Wyoming

<https://sites.google.com/a/wyo.gov/dfsweb/social-services/child-protective-services>

The above list of state child abuse reporting numbers is courtesy of the Child Welfare Information Gateway.¹

¹ https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/reslist/rl_dsp.cfm?rs_id=5&rate_chno=W-00082, accessed on November 10, 2014.

10 Child Abuse Prevention Steps Your Homeschool Group Can Take Today

Child abuse is a serious issue that can occur in any group or culture. Whether it's a public school, private school, or homeschool, or whether it's a Christian, atheist, or Buddhist group — child abuse can be found everywhere. This tragedy is no respecter of demographic differences. It is important, therefore, that homeschool groups equip and empower themselves with the right information and tools to be able to fight abuse. Homeschool groups also need to equip and empower their members.

To this end, here are 10 steps your homeschool group can take *today* to make children and families safer:

1. Ask your homeschool group if it has a child protection policy.

Whether it's your national organization, state support group, or local co-op, any and every organization that works with, for, and around children should have a child protection policy. So ask your homeschool group(s) if it does.

If it does: Ask to review it. You have a responsibility to make sure that the groups to which you entrust your kids have such a policy in place. Don't just assume they do. *Ask.* Children deserve a safe, nurturing environment for their education. Make sure your group's policy is appropriate, sufficient, and up-to-date. If you're not sure if it is, do some research.

If it does not: Ask that one is made. Be firm about this. Child protection policies are essential to keeping children safe as well as protecting the integrity of your organization.

2. Plan an awareness event.

Organize an all-parent, mandatory meeting for your homeschool group or organization. (If you need help doing so, here is a step-by-step planning guide.) It doesn't have to be long — even an hour or two will suffice in the beginning. During this event, explain to your group's members the seriousness of child abuse, why homeschoolers cannot tolerate child abuse, what child abuse is, and the responsibility of every member and family to report abuse to the proper authorities. At this event, introduce to your members any new action steps your group is taking, such as a child protection policy, special speaking events, a resource library, etc. Make this awareness event a regular occurrence every 6-12 months. Consider planning a longer event (such as an entire day) where multiple professionals can present important information on the topic.

3. Invite a child abuse prevention expert to speak to your homeschool group.

There are many organizations dedicated to preventing child abuse. These organizations have significant knowledge and expertise. They also have dedicated individuals who are eager to speak to community groups about child abuse prevention. Contact one of these organizations and ask to have a speaker present to your homeschool group. Examples of organizations whose local chapters you could contact are RAINN, Prevent Child Abuse, and G.R.A.C.E. We at HARO are also willing to speak to any homeschool group.

4. Invite a child welfare or social work professional to speak to your homeschool group.

Myths and paranoia about the child welfare system often discourage or prevent many homeschool parents from reporting known child abuse. So while educating yourself and your community about child abuse is important, you also need to overcome stigma about the system in place to help those who are being abused. To this end, consider inviting a child welfare or social work professional to speak to your homeschool co-op or organization. Ask them to explain what they do, what happens when someone makes an anonymous tip, and how they work to protect children and families. Getting to know such a professional on a personal level — and letting them get to know you — can go a long way in overcoming myths and paranoia that keep children from receiving the help they need.

5. Do some research.

Go to the library or get on your computer and start researching! Learn about what child abuse is, what the warning signs are, how to report child abuse, common characteristics of child sexual offenders, how sexual offenders attempt to discredit child witnesses, — and that's just the beginning! Knowledge is power. Equip yourself with that power so you can keep the children in your communities safe.

6. Ask that background checks be done on anyone working professionally with children in your homeschool group.

Many homeschool co-ops and organizations hire outside help to teach certain classes that parents feel inadequate teaching. Many also offer childcare for younger children while parents teach older children. For anyone in your group that volunteers or is being paid to work with children, require that they go through a vigorous screening process. This process should involve a professional background check.

7. Ask that anyone who is a leader or works professionally with children in your homeschool group takes a mandatory reporting class.

There are an abundance of free classes online (here is an example) that you can take to learn what a mandatory reporter is required to report. While “mandatory reporter” is a term defined by law, it behooves anyone working professionally with children to understand the dynamics of child abuse and what should be reported when (and to whom). Encourage your group’s leaders, teachers, and volunteers to take one of these classes so their knowledge about child abuse prevention goes above and beyond.

8. Establish best practices in your homeschool group for reporting abuse.

The *best* practice for reporting abuse is, of course, *to report abuse as soon as you become aware of it*.

But it is important that your homeschool co-op or organization, as part of Step #1 (Create a child protection policy), establishes “best practices” for who reports abuse, how to report it, and who the abuse gets reported to. You do not want a situation where multiple people are told about a case of child abuse but no one reports it because they think someone else did. Your group should have a clearly written policy about the exact steps to take, who takes them, and how to follow-up to make sure those steps *were* taken. There are numerous places where you can get information about child abuse prevention best practices; the National Children’s Advocacy Center is a good place to start.

9. Proactively encourage your group’s members to teach children accurate sex education and information about child abuse.

Encourage your homeschool group’s members to educate their children about sexual abuse. Parents need to teach their children what abuse is and empower them to say, “No!” This means, of course, that they need to teach them about *sex* — which they might not be comfortable hearing. But this is a great example of exactly why sex education is vitally important. Children need to know the proper names for their body parts, they need to know what is good touch versus bad touch, they need to know their bodies belong to them and no adult should make them do anything that makes them uncomfortable, and they need to have the words to use to express themselves to you if they experience abuse.

10. Put together a library of resources about child abuse, prevention, and recovery that is publicly accessible to your homeschool group’s members.

Ask your homeschool group or organization to start assembling a library of resources about child abuse, prevention, and recovery. There are many helpful books available on all of these topics. Allow your group’s members and families to access these resources for free.

The above 10 steps are of course not the only things your homeschool group can do to help prevent child abuse. But they are all important and are easy, simple steps you can take *today*. Child abuse is a serious issue in homeschooling and we need to start treating it as such.

Additional Steps To Make Your Community Safer

There are many steps that you as a fellow parent, homeschool leader, or homeschooling organization can take to make your community safer from child abuse and neglect. These steps can be divided into 2 categories: *proactive* steps and *preventive* steps.

Proactive steps

Proactive steps are steps you can start taking today to just make your families and communities healthier and safer in general. The following six protective factors have been linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect:

First, nurturing and attachment: When children and their caretakers have positive and reaffirming feelings for one another, children develop trust that those caretakers will provide the resources necessary to thrive.

Second, knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development: Parents and caretakers who understand child development and growth can provide an environment where kids can live up to their full potential.

Third, parental resilience: Parents and caretakers who have positive attitudes and can creatively problem solve are able to more effectively embrace challenges — and less likely to direct anger at their kids.

Fourth, social connections: Raising a family and homeschooling are both difficult tasks. Having trustworthy and loving family friends make those tasks more manageable as well as enjoyable.

Fifth, concrete supports for parents: Families need basic resources like food, clothing, housing, and transportation, as well as access to services like child or mental health care. (Sadly, many families lack these.)

Sixth, social and emotional competence: Children need to learn how to express their emotions in healthy ways, positively interact with others, and self-regulate their behaviors. Learning how to do so can lower their risk of abuse.

Ask yourself — and your fellow homeschooling families and leaders — how your community can promote and inspire others to embrace the above six factors. Whether that involves holding free classes about child development, encouraging social events, or taking care of the struggling or low-income families in your homeschooling community, create an environment where no child is lacking the means to excel and thrive at life.

Preventative steps

No matter how proactive you are in ensuring your communities and families are safe, abuse will still happen. So the following are preventative steps you can take to help you be able to prevent neglect as soon as you become aware of it:

First, get to know everyone in your community. As you build relationships, you can better identify problems as soon as they arise.

Second, make it a habit to help every family under stress. Have your community offer to babysit, help with chores and errands, or suggest resources in the community that can help.

Third, reach out to children in your community. You never know how much a random smile or word of encouragement can mean. You also are communicating you are a safe person to talk to if a child doesn't feel safe at home.

Fourth, learn how to recognize and report signs of child abuse and neglect. And if and when you have concerns, be sure to report those concerns to the proper authorities.

Fifth, teach others how to recognize and report signs of child abuse and neglect. The more that everyone in your community knows how to identify neglect, the better equipped you'll be to address it if and when it arises.

Sixth, establish a system of home visitations for your homeschool community or group. Or even just a system of phone calls. This doesn't need to be nosy or annoying. But in the event that, for example, a family hasn't been to the weekly park day for several weeks and no one knows what happened to the family, have a system in place where someone takes note and makes a point to check in on that family to make sure they are ok.

As you take both these proactive and preventative steps, remember that child abuse and neglect is not necessarily the result of intentionally abusive parenting. They can be caused by circumstances completely outside the control of a good and loving parent. When parents are trying their best but simply lack the necessary resources, they should be reached out to and surrounded with support. However, when parents are simply abusing or neglecting their children out of anger, apathy, or substance abuse, it is important to get the necessary help to the children.

When in doubt, always make a report to the proper authorities.

Websites and Resources for Further Information

General organizations

American Humane Association: <http://www.americanhumane.org/children/>

Child Abuse Prevention Center: <http://www.thecapcenter.org/>

ChildHelp: <http://www.childhelp.org/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

National Children's Advocacy Center: <http://www.nationalcac.org/>

National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect: <http://www.ndacan.cornell.edu/>

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network: <https://www.rainn.org/>

Safe Horizon: <http://www.safehorizon.org/>

Stop It Now!: <http://www.stopitnow.org/>

Tennyson Center for Children: <http://www.childabuse.org/>

Religious organizations

Godly Response to Abuse in Christian Environments: <http://netgrace.org/>

Organizations that provide child abuse prevention training

Child Abuse Prevention Center: <http://www.thecapcenter.org/>

Godly Response to Abuse in Christian Environments: <http://netgrace.org/>

National Children's Advocacy Center: <http://www.nationalcac.org/>

Stop It Now!: <http://www.stopitnow.org/>

Christian-Specific Books

Basyle Tchividjian, *Protecting Children from Abuse in the Church: Steps to Prevent and Respond*

Diane Langberg, *On the Threshold of Hope*

Elizabeth Esther, *Girl at the End of the World: My Escape from Fundamentalism in Search of Faith with a Future*

Janet Heimlich, *Breaking Their Will: Shedding Light on Religious Child Maltreatment*

Jeff Crippen and Anna Wood, *A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides in Your Church*

General Books

Charles L. Whitfield, *Healing The Child Within: Discovery and Recovery for Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families*

Gregory L. Jantz and Ann McMurray, *Healing the Scars of Emotional Abuse*

Kathryn Brohl, *When Your Child Has Been Molested: A Parents' Guide to Healing and Recovery*

Laura Davis, *Allies in Healing: When the Person You Love Was Sexually Abused as a Child*

Mari McCaig and Edward S. Kubany, *Healing the Trauma of Domestic Violence: A Workbook for Women*

Meg Kennedy Dugan and Roger R. Hock, *It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence*

Mike Lew, *Victims No Longer: The Classic Guide for Men Recovering from Sexual Child Abuse*

Mike Lew and Richard Hoffman, *Leaping Upon the Mountains: Men Proclaiming Victory over Sexual Child Abuse*

Wendy Maltz, *The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*

Child Abuse Awareness 101 for Homeschoolers Test

1. What are the four major types of child maltreatment?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

2. Is accidental physical injury of a child considered physical abuse?

Yes

No

3. Fill in the blank: Sudden changes in _____ and unexplained _____ are both warning signs of child abuse.

4. True or false? "Children with disabilities are particularly at risk of physical abuse."

True

False

5. Do younger or older mothers physically abuse their children more frequently?

Younger

Older

6. Which is the most prevalent form of child abuse in the United States?

a. physical abuse

b. neglect

c. sexual abuse

d. emotional abuse

7. True or false? "People in same-sex relationships are more likely to abuse children than people in opposite-sex relationships."

True

False

8. What percentage of juvenile sexual abuse victims know their perpetrator in some way?

a. 90%

b. 0%

c. 100%

d. 25%

9. Fill in the blank: the rate of sibling incest may be _____ times the rate of parent-child sexual abuse.

10. Should you always trust a child who comes to you with a story about abuse?

Yes

No