



Step Up and Speak Out

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SELECTING YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

As a parent, you are one of the most important links in the chain of prevention. By stepping up and speaking out to youth serving organizations in your community, you have the power to protect your child and countless others against child sexual abuse.



Between soccer practice, tutoring sessions and piano lessons, your children are frequently under the care of many different adults. It is important that youth serving organizations take proactive measures to prevent child abuse. As parents, extra vigilance with organizations has the power to make child protection a societal norm.

SELECTING YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS THAT TAKE CHILD PROTECTION SERIOUSLY

Be proactive and ask the right questions when evaluating youth serving organizations. Although it may be uncomfortable at first, organizations should be ready and willing to talk about their prevention measures. If they aren't, work past the discomfort and make your concerns heard or seek another organization that is taking the issue seriously.

How are Employees and Volunteers Screened?

Careful screening and selection of potential employees and volunteers is not convenient or easy, but it ensures the most qualified candidates are hired. Pre-employment screening should evaluate the candidate's qualifications, personal and professional background.

Candidates should be screened in a variety of ways. Each candidate should complete an in depth application, provide personal and professional references, submit to a criminal background check and complete an interview.

Do not accept excuses. "We know and trust our staff well..." or "We do not have the time or money to screen..." simply are not acceptable answers. Don't be afraid to speak your mind. Make it clear, "I do not want any adult who has not been properly screened caring for my child."

Is There a Policy Limiting One Adult-One Child Situations?

After an employee is hired, they should be monitored to ensure they keep in line with all protection policies and do not engage in high risk behaviors. Youth serving organizations should have clearly defined child protection policies.

Over 80% of abuse incidents occur in one adult-one child situations. One-on-one time is important to a child's emotional growth and development, but it does not have to happen behind closed doors. One adult-one child interactions should take place in an open, observable setting.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How are your staff and volunteers selected?
- How are applicants screened before they are hired?
- Do you check each applicant's personal and professional references? What is the process?





QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are your staff and volunteers trained in sexual abuse prevention and response?
- What type of protective policies do you have in place to prevent child sexual abuse?
- Do you have a policy for one-on-one time between adults and children and what is that policy?

Staff should have advanced training for activities such as toileting, diapering, driving with children, and overnight activities.

The organization should welcome you to visit your child at any time. Make it a habit to drop in unexpectedly.

You may hear, "Sexual abuse would never happen here." But know that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. In 90% of those cases, the families knew and trusted the perpetrator.

How do Older and Younger Children Interact?

Older or larger youth are perpetrators in at least 40% of all sexual

abuse incidences. Supervising contact between children and older/bigger youth requires structure and adult supervision.

All teens working at the organization should undergo the same preliminary screening process as employees. There should be separate areas and activities for different age groups. Make it clear that you would always like an adult present with your child.

Are There Clear Procedures for Reporting Suspicions or Incidences of Abuse?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do you train, allow and empower your staff and volunteers to report suspicions of sexual abuse?
- When a report of abuse is made, are parents notified?
- If a staff member or volunteer violates the child sexual abuse prevention policy, what procedures and penalties follow?

All fifty states require that professionals that work with children report reasonable suspicion of abuse. Youth serving organizations should have clear reporting procedures. Any violations of child protection policies should be taken seriously and evaluated by multiple parties. Employees should know and feel comfortable with these procedures.

Push for organizations to provide mandatory reporting training for their staff. Over half of all mandated reporters fail to report suspicion of abuse. In most cases they are simply confused or uninformed about their responsibilities. You can help by sharing this information.

If you have reason to believe abuse is occurring at an organization, trust your intuition and make a report.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How are older youth screened?
- How are older youth monitored and supervised when working with younger children?
- How are interactions between children and teens structured?