



A School's Guide to Implementing Maine's Child Sexual Abuse Prevention & Response Model Policy



mecasa
MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT



About

[Maine's Public Law 20-A MRS §254, sub-18](#) requires that all school administrative units in Maine with public pre-K through grade 5 programs have a written policy for child sexual abuse prevention education and response. In 2018, the Maine Department of Education (DOE) released the [Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education and Response Model Policy](#) to support schools to implement effective child sexual abuse prevention policies.

The Children's Safety Partnership (CSP) was created to support schools and communities in these efforts. CSP is an online toolkit with information for parents, teachers, administrators, schools, and communities for implementing Maine's law, and responding to and preventing child sexual abuse.

The Children's Safety Partnership is an initiative of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault in partnership with the Maine Department of Education, Maine's sexual assault service providers, and local schools across the state.

Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) has a significant impact on the well-being of many of Maine's children. Effective prevention education helps prevent abuse before it begins. Educators have an important role in providing accurate information to children and their families.

There are few specific programs which have been proven to prevent violence before it begins, but in recent years we have learned more about what strategies are effective. The best prevention strategies develop healthy messages, and then reinforce those messages through many activities, conversations, and programs with both adults and children. The Maine Dept. of Education Model Policy for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention uses this approach – prevention topics for children as well as prevention and response training for adults are outlined. By addressing both of these, schools can help children develop skills to understand their bodies and boundaries, while putting the responsibility where it belongs: on the adults in the community who can keep children safe.

Definitions

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
Child sexual abuse - All sexual engagement either through hands-on or hands-off activities between an adult and a child is sexual abuse. Sexual engagement between children can also be sexual abuse when there is a significant age difference between the children or if the children are very different in development, size, or other power differential.	<p>There is no single definition of child sexual abuse, but the definition here combines the most common elements. Additional information includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop It Now! CSA Definition and Fact Sheet• National Sexual Violence Resource Center: CSA Prevention Overview• Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers & Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault: CSA Overview• Maine Criminal Code: Sexual Abuse of Minors
Evidence-informed practice or program - Programs that use the best available knowledge and research to guide program design and implementation; the program has clearly identified intended outcomes and conducts evaluations to measure those outcomes.	<p>There are very few sexual abuse prevention programs that meet the specific definition of "evidence-based" – but many different techniques that are "evidence-informed" – meaning, there is evidence to show that they work. Instead of relying on a set of standard curricula, sexual abuse prevention programs often rely on a series of practices that are considered effective, such as delivering the information multiple times, in multiple ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US DHHS Child Welfare Information Gateway: Evidence-Based Practice Definitions & Glossaries• US Centers for Disease Control: Sexual Violence Prevention Strategies• Primary Prevention: The Next Step in Sexual Violence Prevention Education
Qualified instructor - An individual who has the knowledge, skills and comfort level necessary to professionally address child sexual abuse prevention education, aligned to research and best practices. A qualified instructor may be school personnel or from a community-based organization.	<p>Not everyone is qualified or comfortable talking about sexual abuse or abuse prevention. Because sexual abuse is so common, but so rarely talked about, it's important to identify instructors who feel comfortable and confident talking about bodies, boundaries, feelings, and sexuality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maine's sexual assault support centers offer free training from professionals who are experts in child sexual abuse prevention. Find your local center.• SAMSHA: Concept of Trauma and a Trauma-Informed Approach
School personnel - Any individual required to be certified, authorized, or approved by the Department of Education under Chapter 501 or 502 of Title 20-A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maine Revised Statutes: Chapter 501• Maine Revised Statutes: Chapter 502

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Sexual Abuse

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
<p>School personnel receiving a report of or suspecting child sexual abuse, including but not limited to school faculty, staff, coaches and advisors for extracurricular and co-curricular activities, are required to either report directly to DHHS or to confirm in writing that a report was made on their behalf by a school's designated reporter, pursuant to 22 MRSA §4011-A and §4012. Reports should be consistent with Maine school policies JLF.</p>	<p>It is important to listen, respect, and believe children reporting incidences of abuse. Additional resources for responding to a disclosure include:</p> <p>Children's Safety Partnership: Supporting Students</p>
<p>School volunteers who are aware of incidents or suspect child sexual abuse must report to school personnel designated in the [School Unit Name] policy or directly to DHHS as noted above.</p>	<p>Adults should never ask children probing questions during a disclosure, because it can cause additional trauma, or harm an investigation. Even with good intentions, additional questions may be forensically unsound, may force the child to re-live an experience, or may lead to conflicting or confusing accounts, which can damage an investigation as well as a child's confidence. Keep questions to those necessary to make a report, and do not ask the child to recount their story to other school personnel or administrators.</p>
<p>Any individuals associated with the school who are not mandated reporters, but who know of or suspect child sexual abuse are encouraged to make a report directly to DHHS.</p>	<p>Reports can be made to DHHS by calling 1-800-452-1999. You may ask to be confidential or anonymous. For more information on Child Abuse Reporting and a list of FAQs, visit Maine DHHS Child Abuse Reporting.</p>
<p>Individuals suspecting or knowing of child sexual abuse should not ask additional questions or engage in interviewing techniques with the child and should limit written documentation to the information required by 22 M.R.S. §4012. Training for unbiased documentation methods is recommended.</p>	<p>Schools may have additional legal obligations under Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act (such as to report abuse to the school's Title IX Coordinator) in order to ensure that the abuse does not impact the child's ability to access education.</p>
<p>Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of child sexual abuse are prohibited.</p>	<p>Full text of referenced laws and policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maine Legislature: Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect (22 MRSA §4011-A)• Maine Legislature: Reporting Procedures (22 MRSA §4012)• Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 USC 1681 and 1682. See also, 34 CFR Part 106. <p>A complete list of mandated reporters in the state of Maine can be found here.</p>

Child Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention Education for School Personnel

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
<p>Child sexual abuse awareness and prevention education for all [School Unit Name] personnel shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Required for all school personnel;	<p>Teachers aren't the only people who can identify and prevent child sexual abuse. Every adult in the community can potentially help keep children safer.</p> <p>Research suggests that child sexual abuse training for educators and school personnel leads to significantly increased reports of abuse. Increases in reports of abuse could lead to improved outcomes for sexually abused children. Read more.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">Delivered by a qualified instructor(s);	<p>Individuals who are comfortable, confident, and skilled at talking about child sexual abuse may be school personnel, or staff or volunteers from a community-based agency which specializes in sexual abuse prevention. Find your local sexual assault support center here.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">A minimum of one hour;	<p>Schools may choose to do one hour for school personnel who spend less time directly with children, such as custodial staff, and more training for personnel who have more exposure to children. Personnel such as school nurses, school counselors, and health education teachers may take extended training or become trainers themselves.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">Evidence-informed;Completed within six months of hire;Updated every four years.	<p>For a longer discussion of evidence-informed programming, see the definitions section.</p>
<p>The training will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Increase awareness of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors in children; and	<p>Sexual exploration and play are a natural part of childhood sexual development; however, some childhood sexual behaviors indicate more than normal curiosity. In some cases, sexual behaviors pose a risk to the safety and well-being of the child and other children in his or her world. Being able to identify natural and expected behaviors, as well as problem behaviors can help keep children safe.</p>

Child Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention Education for School Personnel, Cont.

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
2. Increase ability to identify indicators of sexual abuse, including physical and psychosocial indicators on a spectrum (including lower to higher probability); and	Indicators of sexual abuse are different by age and include both emotional and physical indicators. Children may show few or many indicators – but there is no single red flag that clearly points to abuse. Stop it Now: List of sexual abuse indicators
3. Increase ability to effectively respond to sexual behavior or disclosures or suspicions of child sexual abuse; and	It is important to listen, respect, and believe children reporting incidences of abuse. Additional resources for responding to a disclosure include: Children's Safety Partnership: Supporting Students
4. Includes your local sexual abuse and sexual assault support centers.	Find your local sexual assault support center.

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education

Pre-K - Grade 5 Curriculum Programs

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
<p>Age-appropriate child sexual abuse prevention education curriculum programs shall be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Delivered by qualified instructors;	<p>Individuals who are comfortable, confident, and skilled at talking about child sexual abuse may be school personnel, or staff or volunteers from a community-based agency which specializes in sexual abuse prevention. Find your local sexual assault support center.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Part of the written comprehensive school health education curriculum;	<p>Prevention is most effective when it is addressed multiple times in multiple ways; including it in the comprehensive health curriculum can ensure that this occurs.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Aligned to the Maine Learning Results Health Education Standards for grades Pre-K through 5 (pursuant to Title 20-A, Section 6209); and	<p>The Maine Dept. of Education Health Education Standards can be found here.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Follow an appropriate scope and sequence.	<p>Prevention education should be developmentally appropriate and presented in an order that builds on previous knowledge. Utilizing the Maine Learning Results and Key Concepts (see below) can help to ensure this happens.</p> <p>The “Key Concepts for Sexual Abuse Prevention” from the Maine Dept. of Education, align to the Maine Learning Results and assist in identifying what to teach in each grade span, can be found here.</p>

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education

Pre-K - Grade 5 Curriculum Programs, Cont.

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
<p>The classroom curriculum will be consistent with evidence-informed, age-appropriate child sexual abuse prevention education for students, and include:</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse programming sometimes focuses on material designed to help children identify unsafe behaviors after they have already happened. However, effective prevention is designed to promote healthy skills and knowledge before abuse happens. Some of the themes that help children stay safe include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting healthy sexuality – that is, a healthy understanding of bodies, body parts, and bodily functions;• Clear understanding of body ownership and bodily boundaries;• Understanding a wide range of feelings which include safe and unsafe, but also uncomfortable or confusing situations; and• Confidence that adults will hear and respect their concerns. <p>No single child sexual abuse prevention curriculum is shown as ‘most effective’ in preventing abuse. However, we know that programs that follow the <u>principles of effective prevention</u> – such as addressing content multiple times, in different ways, which are culturally appropriate – have the most impact.</p>
1. Age-appropriate education regarding physical and personal boundaries, including biologically accurate body terminology;	<p>While it can be uncomfortable for some adults to talk about or name body parts with children, it’s an important part of abuse prevention. Naming body parts with biologically accurate information can help children understand that while some body parts are ‘private’, no body parts are shameful or dirty, and it’s okay to talk to safe adults about what’s happening with the body.</p> <p>Teaching children accurate terms empowers them to have ownership over their bodies. If youth are raised with an understanding of body autonomy and consent, they will be more likely to speak up if their boundaries are violated (or they see other’s boundaries violated), and are less likely to violate the boundaries of others. <u>Read more here.</u></p>

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education Pre-K - Grade 5 Curriculum Programs, Cont.

Model Policy Language	Explanation & Details
2. Helps children identify unsafe or uncomfortable situations including a range of feelings, touches or violations of physical boundaries;	Effective programs acknowledge that feelings and touches are not black and white, or safe and unsafe. They can also be uncomfortable or confusing, or might feel good in the body but feel bad emotionally. It is important to present a spectrum of experiences.
3. Helps children identify safe adults with whom they could discuss unsafe or uncomfortable situations; and	<p>In a 2014 study, more than a third of children reported telling an adult something because of what they learned during violence prevention programming. The full study can be found here.</p> <p>According to recent research, “empowerment” – the confidence to talk to adults about experiences – may serve as a protective factor against victimization in two ways: (1) Empowerment may allow for the ability to maintain boundaries, since just knowledge of boundaries is not necessarily sufficient for youth to take action against violations; (2) Perpetrators have shared that they are able to identify vulnerable children and use that vulnerability to sexually abuse a child. Study abstract available here.</p>
4. Helps children identify and develop skills to support a friend who may be experiencing unsafe or uncomfortable situations.	In a 2014 study, nearly half of children surveyed reported using information from violence prevention programs to help themselves or a friend. The full study can be found here .

Resources & Services

[Maine Department of Education, Health Education](#)

The Maine Department of Education is committed to supporting the delivery of effective health education instructional programs. Quality pre-kindergarten through diploma comprehensive school health education provides students with the knowledge and skills to thrive physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. It contributes to a student's ability to successfully practice behaviors that protect and promote health and avoid and reduce health risks.

[Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services](#)

The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) supports Maine's children and their families by providing Children's Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Early Intervention & Prevention Services, and Operations.

[Children's Safety Partnership](#)

The Children's Safety Partnership (CSP) is an online toolkit with information for parents, teachers, administrators, schools, and communities about implementing Maine's child abuse prevention education and response law, and more generally understanding, responding to, and preventing child sexual abuse.

[Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)

The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA) is organized to end sexual violence in Maine and to support high quality sexual violence prevention and response within Maine communities.

The sexual assault crisis and support centers that comprise the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault are:

- [AMHC Sexual Assault Services \(AMHC\)](#)
Serving Aroostook, Hancock & Washington Counties
- [Immigrant Resource Center of Maine \(IRCM\)](#)
Supporting refugee and immigrant communities through culturally and linguistically sensitive services
- [Rape Response Services \(RRS\)](#)
Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties
- [Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services \(SAPARS\)](#)
Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties & the Towns of Bridgton & Harrison
- [Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center \(SAC&SC\)](#)
Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties
- [Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine \(SARSSM\)](#)
Serving Cumberland & York Counties
- [Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine \(SASSMM\)](#)
Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln Counties