

Protecting Our Children



The topic of Child Protection is one that is very important for staff and volunteers to consider. Incidents of adults taking advantage of youth in damaging ways continue to be documented in youth-serving organizations around the country. In an effort to prepare those who work with youth in 4-H Youth Development Programs, this lesson on “Protecting Our Children” has been developed. Specific topics to be discussed include child abuse awareness; definitions of child abuse, child neglect, and sexual abuse; reporting requirements; reducing volunteers’ and staff members’ risk of being accused of sexual abuse; and safety issues and expectations.

Objectives

1. Understand the importance of being aware of child protection issues.
2. Follow child abuse reporting requirements according to state law.
3. Distinguish among child abuse, child neglect, and sexual abuse, including the recognition of physical and behavioral indicators of the child and caretaker.
4. Take steps to reduce the risks of exposing staff and volunteers to allegations of child sexual abuse.
5. Identify steps to take to ensure the safety of all members involved with 4-H Youth Development Program activities.



Protecting Our Children Scenarios



To begin the lesson, we're going to take a look at a number of scenarios related to child protection issues.

(Refer to lesson plan for scenarios and suggested responses.)

Objective #1

State the importance of being aware of child protection issues.



Knowledge of child protection issues is important for volunteers and staff working in the 4-H Youth Development program. Understanding the risks that we all face related to the safety and well-being of our youth can help us be proactive and be certain that we are protecting our youth, especially when they are working with us in our programs.

Basics of child protection issues

- Child abuse is a serious problem throughout the United States.
- 2002: there were an estimated 896,000 children in the United States who were victims of abuse or neglect.
 - a rate of 12.3 per 1,000 children
- An estimated 1,400 children died from abuse or neglect.
 - a rate of 1.98 per 100,000 children



Basics of child protection issues

Child abuse is a serious problem throughout the United States.

In 2002, there were an estimated 896,000 children in the United States who were victims of abuse or neglect, or a rate of 12.3 out of every 1,000 children. An estimated 1,400 children died from abuse or neglect, a rate of 1.98 per 100,000 children.

Basics of child protection issues

- Fiscal 2004: 57 confirmed deaths of children from abuse or neglect in Indiana.
- 69,257 children reported as abuse/neglect victims; and 21,250 cases substantiated.
- Child abuse is a problem that multiplies itself.
 - 40% of sexual offenders and 76% of serial rapists report having been abused as children.
- Child abuse and neglect costs an estimated \$258 million every day in the United States.



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Objective #2

Follow child abuse reporting requirements according to state law.



State laws are very specific regarding our responsibilities to report any incidents that we suspect as being child abuse or neglect. It is critical to the safety of our youth that we do so!

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, contact your local child protective services office or law enforcement agency, so professionals can assess the situation. Many States have a toll-free number to call to report suspected child abuse or neglect. To find out where to call, consult the Child Welfare Information Gateway website on mandated reporting and child abuse reporting numbers at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/reporting.cfm>.

Reporting Requirements

- Everyone has a moral, civic, and legal duty to help prevent child abuse.
- Volunteers who work with children over long periods of time may notice changes that signal concern.
- State laws require that anyone with knowledge about child abuse must report it to the authorities. Visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway web site to find out about specific reporting laws, penalties, and procedures for your state:
http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/.



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Who should report abuse or neglect?

- Any person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect must report.
- Any staff member of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency must report.
- Staff and volunteers have “double duty” to report
- Follow the appropriate chain of command: volunteers should report to the 4-H Youth Development staff member; the staff member should report to a supervisor.
- Anonymous reports are accepted.



In general, who should report abuse or neglect?

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Any staff member of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency must report.

Staff and volunteers have “double duty”:

To report on their own behalf; and

To notify the staff member in charge of the program, who also has duty to report.

Follow the appropriate chain of command. Volunteers should report to the 4-H Youth Development staff member; the staff member should report to a supervisor.

Anonymous reports are accepted.

How to Report

- Contact local Child Protective Services
 - In Indiana, call 800-800-5556 or visit <http://www.in.gov/dcs/protection/dfcchi.html>.
- Provide identifying information
 - Name and age of child
 - Address and phone number
- Describe the situation calmly
 - Provide dates, eyewitness accounts, and direct observations.



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Provide identifying information

Name

Age of child

Address and phone number

When describing a situation

Remain calm.

Provide dates, eyewitness accounts, and direct observations.

Confidentiality is Key

- If abuse is suspected:
 - Report the case to Child Protective Services.
 - Notify the staff in charge of program who will notify a supervisor.
- DO NOT discuss the situation with others.



Confidentiality is Key in Child Abuse

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Determining Child Abuse

- You may not be 100% certain whether it is or is not an abuse case.
- When questions arise, seek advice from 4-H Youth Development Staff.
- Always err on the side of the safety of the child.



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Objective #3

Distinguish among child abuse, child neglect, and sexual abuse, including the recognition of physical and behavioral indicators of the child and caretaker.



In helping us to determine whether or not a child is being abused or neglected, it will be helpful for us to know some basic definitions and characteristics of each.

Child Abuse Definitions

- Child abuse has occurred when “...the child’s physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury by the act or omission of the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian.”
- Child Abuse: “Any non-accidental injury caused by a child’s caretaker” (Indiana code 31-34-1).



Child Abuse Definitions

Child abuse has occurred when “...the child’s physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury by the act or omission of the child’s parent, guardian, or custodian.” Or, in everyday language: “Any non-accidental injury caused by a child’s caretaker” (Source: Indiana code 31-34-1).

Physical Abuse

- Any non-accidental physical injury caused by the parent or caregiver, or a serious injury caused by the caregiver's failure to take action to prevent injury.
- Inflicting a non-accidental physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child.



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Child Neglect

- Failure to provide for a child's basic needs: adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or supervision.
- Neglect can be physical or emotional.

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Sexual Abuse

- Any physical contact with a child for sexual gratification.
- Sexual abuse is inappropriate adolescent or adult sexual behavior with a child.

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Recognizing Physical Child Abuse

- Physical indicators:
 - Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures
 - Dental or head injuries
- Behavioral indicators of the child:
 - Verbally reports abuse
 - Too eager to please
 - Depression, low self-esteem
 - Seems frightened of parents; protests or cries when time to leave



Recognizing Physical Child Abuse

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Recognizing Physical Child Abuse

- Behavioral indicators of caretaker:
 - Harsh disciplinarian
 - Constantly describes child negatively
 - Defensive
 - Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for child's injury
 - Has a history of abuse as a child



Behavioral indicators of caretaker:

Harsh disciplinarian

Constantly describes child negatively

Defensive

Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for child's injury

Has a history of abuse as a child

Recognizing Child Neglect

- Physical indicators:
 - Dirty, smelly, torn, or inappropriate clothing for the weather
 - Frequently absent from school
- Behavioral indicators of the child:
 - Dull, listless
 - Begging or stealing food
 - Constant fatigue
 - Inappropriate seeking of affection
 - Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
 - Abuses alcohol or other drugs
 - States there is no one home to provide care



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Recognizing Child Neglect

- Behavioral indicators of caretaker
 - Substance abuser
 - Chaotic life style
 - Apathetic toward child
 - Expects too much of child
 - Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner



Behavioral indicators of caretaker

Substance abuser

Chaotic life style

Apathetic toward child

Expects too much of child

Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner

Recognizing Sexual Child Abuse

- Physical indicators:
 - Difficulty/pain in walking or sitting
 - Torn or stained clothing
- Behavioral indicators of the child:
 - Anxiety, irritability, or constant inattentiveness
 - Sleep disorders (e.g., nightmares, bedwetting)
 - Abrupt change in behavior
 - Excessive clinging to, or fear of being left alone
 - Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities



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Suddenly refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities

Recognizing Sexual Child Abuse

- Additional behavioral indicators of the child:
 - Sudden change in appetite
 - Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
 - Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease
 - Runs away
 - Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver



Recognizing Sexual Child Abuse

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Sudden change in appetite

Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior

Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease

Runs away

Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver

Recognizing Sexual Child Abuse

- Behavioral indicators of caretaker:
 - Extremely protective of family privacy
 - Does not allow child to be involved in activities
 - Is jealous or controlling with family members



Behavioral indicators of caretaker:

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Does not allow child to be involved in activities

Is jealous or controlling with family members

Objective #4

Take steps to reduce the risks of exposing staff and volunteers to allegations of child sexual abuse.



Those of us who work with youth automatically put ourselves at a risk of having someone allege that we have done something inappropriate with a child. Unfortunately, that's part of today's society that we live with. There are a number of steps, however, that can help us to reduce the risk of those allegations and keep the activities safe for both the adults and the children who are participating.

Overview

- Charges of sexual harassment and abuse are real.
 - Accusations against staff can be made when perceptions differ regarding actual events.
 - Staff and volunteers need to avoid risky situations that involve youth.
- We need to take more precautions today than we did in past years.
- It is prudent to review risky occasions and situations and take necessary precautions to ensure safety of all participants.



Overview

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Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- **Location**
 - Activities in private homes present medium risk.
 - Activities in isolated settings (e.g. wilderness) present high risk.
- **Parental Involvement**
 - Parental involvement signals less vulnerability.
 - Higher parental involvement lowers the risk.
 - Molesters seek out children who are isolated.



There are a number of factors that we need to consider when we assess the level of risk associated with a certain activity.

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Molesters seek out children who are isolated.

Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Adult Supervision
 - The more adults, the lower the risk.
 - There are no magic supervision ratios.
 - Factors to consider:
 - Size of the group
 - Ages of children involved
 - Nature of the activity
 - Setting where activity occurs
 - At least three people should always be present.



Adult Supervision

The more adults, the lower the risk.

There are no magic supervision ratios.

Factors to consider:

Size of the group

Ages of children involved

Nature of the activity

Setting where activity occurs

At least three people should always be present.

Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Frequency and duration of interaction
 - Minimal interaction between child and adult lowers the risk.
 - Longer periods of involvement provide more opportunities for abuse to occur.
- Changing clothes
 - The less need to change clothes associated with the activity, the lower the risk.
 - When children are changing clothes, preparing for bed, or showering, they are more vulnerable.



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Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Training
 - Volunteer/staff training can reduce risks.
 - It serves to:
 - Alert volunteers and staff that the organization will respond aggressively to any allegations.
 - Inform volunteers and staff about what to look for.
 - Communicate organizational policies to prevent child abuse.



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Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Education of children
 - The more education children receive on child abuse, the lower the risk.
- Monitoring
 - The more monitoring of an activity, the lower the risk.
 - When no monitoring occurs, the risk increases.



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The more monitoring of an activity, the lower the risk.

When no monitoring occurs, the risk increases.

Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Physical contact
 - The less physical contact, the lower the risk.
 - Activities that require physical contact between adult and child can provide high risk.
 - Adults may justify unacceptable behavior as an unintentional slip.
- Staff turnover
 - Low turnover of both staff and volunteers lowers the risks.



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Staff turnover

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Factors to Consider When Assessing Risk

- Age and disabilities
 - Risk is highest for children between the ages of 8 and 12.
 - Children with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be abused.
 - Children with family problems are also at high risk.



Age and disabilities

The age of onset is highest for children between the ages of 8 and 12. The risk is especially high for 10 to 12 year olds.

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Distribute copies of Child Sexual Abuse Risk Exposure Matrix.

4-H Youth Development Programs involve youth, caring adults, parents, and teachers or advisors in fun learning activities, projects, and special events. Now that you know more about the 11 risk factors, you can take steps to ensure that the activities you plan are low-risk experiences. As a result, you will ensure that all who are involved in the program will have a rewarding, educational experience.

Objective #5

Identify steps to take to ensure the safety of all members involved with 4-H Youth Development Program activities.



While youth are under the care of staff and volunteers in the 4-H Youth Development Programs, there are several safety issues and expectations to consider. Let's explore these at this time.

Safety Guidelines for Volunteers and Staff

- Conduct activities in compliance with all 4-H Youth Development program guidelines.
- Keep 4-H Youth Development staff informed of all activities.
- Review activities to identify potential risks.
- Develop a plan for emergencies.
- Have a first aid kit available at your meeting site.



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Review activities to identify potential risks.

Develop a plan for emergencies.

Have a first aid kit available at your meeting site.

Safety Guidelines for Volunteers and Staff

- Begin your activity with a safety discussion.
- Be able to document that youth can follow safety guidelines.
- Equipment and machines used must be in good repair and appropriate for youth.
- Provide protective safety equipment.
 - Protective flotation devices when in, or near water
 - Safety helmets used at horse events
 - Safety goggles worn when using power tools



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Safety Guidelines for Volunteers and Staff

- Develop a specific supervision plan for each activity.
- Use permission forms for special activities.
- Include health information and parent's signed authorization for emergency care.
- Be sure that accident insurance coverage is in place for all events.
- Always reduce risks by putting safety first.
- If an accident/incident occurs, notify the 4-H Youth Development staff member immediately; complete an accident/incident report form as soon as possible.



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Use permission forms for special activities.

Include health information and parent's signed authorization for emergency care.

Be sure that accident insurance coverage is in place for all events.

Always reduce risks by putting safety first.

If an accident/incident occurs, notify the 4-H Youth Development staff member immediately; complete an accident/incident report form as soon as possible.

As you can see, there are several precautions we can take to ensure the safety of the youth and adults who participate in our programs. We can never completely eliminate all of the risk associated with our activities, but these precautions show that we are taking reasonable and prudent steps to ensure the safety of all those who participate in the program.

Conclusion and Quiz



This lesson has provided information to staff and volunteers related to the application and screening procedures recommended for volunteers in the 4-H Youth Development Program. Following these or similar procedures will help to ensure that the youth in our programs are well cared for as they participate in 4-H Youth Development activities and events.

Thank the volunteers for their participation.

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