



Hot Topics in Child Abuse Prevention

Policies - Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) is a key focus area for youth serving organization's safety & risk management program. A thorough and comprehensive abuse prevention program must be in place in order to protect youth, families, community and the organization itself. A youth protection and/or abuse prevention policy should be in effect that has been reviewed and adopted by the Board of Directors. This policy provides direction for the ongoing efforts of the organization. The effectiveness of efforts should be evaluated each year to better understand their effectiveness.

Training - CAP training is necessary for all staff and all program volunteers. An overview and policy statement should be included in the orientation that is provided to all policy volunteers. Sample outlines and training materials are available from Safe-Wise Consulting and other sources. Documentation of initial and annual refresher training and a signed copy of a Code of Conduct should be included in all employee and volunteer personnel files. The "Code" outlines acceptable standards for behavior including limiting contact with youth outside of the organization.

Screening - Thorough screening procedures are a crucial part of CAP efforts. Organizations should follow proven screening practices for all staff (employed and volunteer) that include a signed application proven form, criminal background check, documented reference checks (at least three) and personal interview(s). Other techniques would include group interviews and carefully monitored position performance and/or interaction with children.

Supervision - Supervision of staff, youth and key facility areas is important. Organizations should ensure that facilities are secure, storage and maintenance areas are not available to the public and that several layers of regular supervision exist at all times. Organizations should implement strategies like the "Rule of 3", "Two-Deep Leadership" and/or no one-on-one in all youth programs.

Awareness - Abuse prevention activities should not cease with employees, program volunteers and the Board. Organizations should provide awareness activities or programs for youth and parents. These activities would include making parents and the community aware of the organization's policies, reporting procedures and abuse prevention efforts. All youth programs should include regular age-appropriate activities that enforce prevention behaviors and/or raise awareness. These activities might include discussion, play, arts or games that cover topics such as "Stranger Danger", good touch/bad touch, Internet safety and bullying prevention. Community events can be tied into National Child Abuse Prevention Month (April) and also include other community-service groups such as schools, law enforcement and advocacy agencies.

Other topical safety resources are available from Safe-Wise Consulting.