



## Preventing Child Abuse in Youth Sports Coaches' Resources

There are many organizations across the country focused on preventing child sexual abuse. The following suggestions come from Darkness to Light (<http://www.d2l.org>), Stop It Now! ([www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)), and Kidpower ([www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org)).

### Learn the Facts

- > “Realities, not trust, should influence your decisions regarding children.” ([www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org))
- > Experts estimate that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before their 18th birthday.
- > The median age for reported sexual abuse is 9 years old.
- > As many as 60% of children are abused by people the family trusts.
- > People who abuse children look and act just like every one else. In fact, they often go out of their way to appear trustworthy to gain access to children.

### Complete screening requirements and training

- > Look for a coaching opportunity with an organization whose policies and mission are a good fit with you.
- > Insist on screenings that include criminal background checks, personal interviews, and professional recommendations for all adults who serve children. You want to be surrounded by other great coaches as well!
- > For warning signs of sexual abuse visit <http://www.stopitnow.org/warnings>.

### Be aware of organizational policies

- > Many organizations prohibit one-adult/one-child situations. If this policy is not in place in your organization, you should still think carefully about the safety of any one-adult/one-child situations and choose group situations when possible.
- > Be clear on the policies for your organization – i.e., overnight trips to games, driving with players, locker room time, etc. If such policies aren't in place, suggest that the leaders of your organization review PCA's guidelines for Youth Sports Leaders.
- > Get past any annoyance you may have in having to deal with the issue of child sexual abuse. Recognize that as a coach, you are part of a network of individuals committed to protecting kids. Embrace this increased scrutiny as a good thing, which will result in prevention of future problems.

### Have a pre-season meeting with parents

- > Ensure that you and your fellow coaches can answer these common questions that parents may and should ask: <http://www.stopitnow.org/9questions>
- > Tell parents that you are educated about child sexual abuse and that you encourage them to be educated as well! Tell them that providing for their kids' safety is a high priority for you. Encourage them to contact you if they have any concerns.
- > Review the organizational and team policies.

## **Make a Plan and Act on Suspicions**

- > “Learn where to go, whom to call and how to react. Your reactions have a powerful influence on vulnerable children.” ([www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org))
- > Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common. Emotional or behavioral signals are more common.
- > Very few reported incidents of sexual abuse are false.
- > You may be faced with a situation where you suspect abuse but don't have any proof. Suspicions are scary, but trust your instincts. Have the courage to report the suspected abuse.

## **Other Resources for Coaches**

- > If you're unsure about whether to make an official report or just need support, contact a children's advocacy center. The staff will help you evaluate your suspicions and your next steps. Contact The National Children's Alliance at [www.nca-online.org](http://www.nca-online.org) or call 1-800-239-9950.
- > All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Some states require that anyone with suspicions report it. Visit [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) for more information.
- > What organizations must do to protect children from harm:  
<http://www.kidpower.org/resources/articles/worth-of-trust.html>
- > Stewards of Children training program for youth sports organizations/coaches:  
[http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dIClJOkGcISE/b.6239363/k.B43F/Child\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_Prevention\\_Training\\_for\\_Organizations.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dIClJOkGcISE/b.6239363/k.B43F/Child_Sexual_Abuse_Prevention_Training_for_Organizations.htm)