



## Preventing Child Abuse in Youth Sports Leaders' 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)).

### **Avoid common misconceptions made by youth organizations ([www.d2l.org](http://www.d2l.org)):**

- > “Only people that we know and trust are allowed to work with our children.” 90% of children are abused by someone whom they know and trust.
- > “We do background checks.” A background check is part of a child protection program, but it cannot be relied as the only method of keeping children safe.
- > “We’ve never had an issue.” Organizations without child protection policies and procedures are easy targets for potential abusers.
- > “That couldn’t happen here, we would know.” Statistics show that most instances of abuse go undetected.
- > “We teach our children the difference between right and wrong.” While it is very important to instill strong values and virtues in children, their safety ultimately lies in the hands of adults.

### **Screen your staff and volunteers**

- > “Screening” is not synonymous with “background checks.” Few cases of sexual abuse are reported, so background checks are not an end-all.
- > Part of screening is selecting the best possible staff, not just avoiding predators. You should screen for people who fit with and support the mission of your organization.

### **Educate and train your staff and volunteers**

- > For warning signs of sexual abuse visit <http://www.stopitnow.org/warnings>.
- > Ensure that your staff and volunteers can answer these common questions that parents may and should ask: <http://www.stopitnow.org/9questions>.

### **Establish policies and procedures**

- > Many organizations prohibit one-adult/one-child situations. Consider adopting this policy. While one-on-one adult relationships can be very enriching for kids, they aren’t necessary in every situation. Parents can ensure their children have these relationships in a safe manner, but for your organization it may be best to limit one-on-one interaction.
- > Define high-risk and low-risk situations for your organization. The determination of risk has to do with the extent to which a situation is observable and interruptible. (ex: low risk – practice on a field; high risk – coach and player driving to/from a game)
- > Define policies for the situations relevant for your organization – i.e. overnight trips to games, driving with players, locker room time, etc.

### **Plan for the reporting of incidents of abuse**

- > Define and promote how reports of suspected abuse should be made to the leadership of the organization.
- > Specify how reports will be processed and managed to avoid miscommunication and lack of follow-up.
- > Visit the following site for more information:  
[http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgClSE/b.6236033/k.3769/Plan\\_for\\_Reporting\\_Suspected\\_Abuse.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgClSE/b.6236033/k.3769/Plan_for_Reporting_Suspected_Abuse.htm)

### **Resources for Leaders**

- > 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. Information about each state's requirements is available at the Child Welfare Information Gateway [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov).
- > What organizations must do to protect children from harm:  
<http://www.kidpower.org/resources/articles/worthy-of-trust.html>
- > Protect Youth Sports (<http://www.protectyouthsports.com>) is the trusted resource provider for background checks by Positive Coaching Alliance. It is a very thorough national background check service that includes a complete re-verification of all criminal hits for guaranteed accuracy on over 400 million national criminal records.
- > <http://www.nonprofitrisk.org>
- > Stewards of Children training program for youth sports organizations:  
[http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgClSE/b.6239363/k.B43F/Child\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_Prevention\\_Training\\_for\\_Organizations.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgClSE/b.6239363/k.B43F/Child_Sexual_Abuse_Prevention_Training_for_Organizations.htm)