Georgia’s Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation Prevention

Technical Assistance Resource Guide

Guidance for schools and youth-serving organizations to build their capacity for child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention.
Introduction

Georgia’s Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Technical Assistance Resource Guide was created by the Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force Work Group 2: Youth Aware and Safe, operated under the leadership of the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The guide was adapted, with permission, from the 2014 Vermont Sexual Violence Prevention Technical Assistance Resource Guide (TARG).

The Task Force recognizes that child sexual abuse and exploitation are devastating social problems affecting children and families across Georgia and the United States. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study show that 25% of females and 16% of males have experienced sexual abuse as children (Dube et al., 2005). Additionally, it is estimated that 325,000 children are at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation each year (Estes & Weiner, 2002, 2003, 2005).

The TARG is intended to provide guidance for schools and youth-serving organizations to build their capacity for, and knowledge of, child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention, state and local resources, and nationally recognized “best practice” criteria. It will also help professionals identify which sexual abuse and exploitation prevention curricula and activities will work best in their community.

Neither the Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force nor the guide endorses specific child sexual abuse and exploitation curricula, models, or programs. The content of the guide does not reflect the opinions or positions of the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, or the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

Thank you for your dedication to ending the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.
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Chapter 1:
A Background and Overview for Using the Guide

Preventing and reducing the occurrence and recurrence of sexual violence in children and youth is a local, state, and national priority. Sexual violence prevention is a complex issue that requires the expertise of various fields, such as education, health, human services, criminal justice, and the active involvement of many individuals and entities.

The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as:

“Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

Examples of sexual violence include: child sexual abuse, incest, drug-facilitated sexual assault, rape, sexual assault, internet-based sexual crimes, commercial sexual exploitation of children, sexual harassment, sexual bullying, sexual violence by professionals, stalking, statutory rape, sex trafficking, and ritualistic sexual abuse.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background knowledge of this resource guide and its various uses to address:

- Sexual violence prevention as a public health and safety issue
- Adverse Childhood Experiences and increased risks to future trauma
- Vulnerability and the sexual violence continuum
- Significance behind school-based sexual violence prevention
- Prioritizing and enhancing sexual violence prevention
- Georgia’s child sexual abuse and exploitation initiative
- Moving sexual violence prevention efforts forward

Quick Reference Materials:

⇒ Target Audience of Guide
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Exposure to negative experiences and trauma in childhood, known formally among researchers as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), can have an astounding effect on the vulnerability to violence victimization and perpetration as an older youth and adult. Similarly, these childhood experiences negatively impact health over the lifespan. Research has shown that as the number of ACEs increases, the risk of engaging in dangerous behaviors and poor health conditions also increases. Additionally, if left untreated, many of the short-term results of ACEs, such as depression, substance abuse, poor school performance, falling grades, inappropriate sexual behaviors, eating disorders, and poor interpersonal relationships, can lead to far more detrimental behaviors during adolescence and adulthood. For example, exposure to early child sexual abuse can compromise a child’s understanding of personal safety, sexual boundaries, and healthy relationships and encourage feelings of distrust, helplessness, linking sex with love, and viewing oneself as a sex object. These patterns create vulnerability to promiscuity, sexual exploitation and trafficking potentially leading to teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, gang involvement, criminal activity, or suicide. While intervention and treatment services are critical, an end to this type of victimization is only possible through primary prevention or approaches that take place before sexual abuse has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization.

Sexual Violence Continuum

Although research has shown that the incidence rate has decreased over the past 10 years, likely due to prevention efforts, experts estimate that 1 in 10 children is sexually abused before the age of 18, yet most never disclose their abuse. Roughly 90% of survivors of commercial sexual exploitation report having previously experienced childhood sexual abuse. Apparent from these statistics, the continuum of sexual violence is clear if left uninterrupted. In addition to trauma experienced from early abuse, child sex trafficking victims often suffer trauma from having significant involvement with the child welfare system through foster care placement and high rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system. Trafficked youth also typically have distinguishable histories of educational interruption and school truancy and expulsion. These systems and entities present considerable opportunities for prevention and intervention. Sexual violence does not occur from one single cause but instead through an environment, physical and/or social, bred with increased risk factors and decreased protective factors. Creating healthy norms that promote sexual violence prevention at the community and societal level, rather than focusing at the individual level, is the key to sustained change. In order to establish this new social norm, communities must demand the adherence to high standards for child protection as well as emphasize child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention education at all age levels. Training for adults that work with and/or have
responsibility for children and youth, such as in schools, youth-serving agencies, faith communities, and sports or club organizations is essential. Additionally, prevention efforts which include broad skills-based education for children throughout school years on topics such as personal body safety, appropriate boundaries, social and emotional health, healthy sexual development, relationship building, and resistance skill development decrease vulnerability and create a safe, supportive learning environment. (Appendix F & Appendix H)

**Prioritizing and Enhancing Sexual Violence Prevention in Georgia**

Child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention is becoming increasingly important within government agencies, schools, youth-serving agencies, and community organizations throughout Georgia. One example of how Georgia is addressing sexual violence can be found within the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force. The mission of the Task Force, led by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, is to protect the citizens of Georgia from perpetrators and systems of sexual exploitation while concurrently working to support recovery of victims of commercial sexual exploitation to ensure that they are ready for college, work, and a successful future.

The Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force operates by a targeted, strategic framework which consists of individual work groups addressing the five elements of the trafficking continuum: (1) Vulnerability, (2) Recruitment, (3) Exploitation, (4) Withdrawal, and (5) Reintegration. Specifically, the Task Force functions based on eight objectives: Community Awareness and Education; Youth Aware and Safe; Deterring Traffickers and Buyers; Keeping At-Risk Youth Safe; Apprehending, Investigating, and Prosecuting; Examining Labor, International, and Adult Sex Trafficking; Survivors Supported and Protected; and Survivors Recovering and Thriving.

National strategies Georgia is considering include:

- Collaborations between community partners and academic researchers are being forged to help evaluate the quality and efficacy of prevention activities.

- School and community partners are investing in professional development and training for those doing prevention work.

- Youth are playing a pivotal role in the education of their peers and communities on sexual violence, and they are also pushing back against the tide of violence.

Created by the Task Force’s Youth Aware and Safe Work Group, the intention of this guide is to specifically address child sexual abuse and exploitation within the sexual violence continuum and how communities can engage in prevention strategies to improve the health and well-being of their youth population.
The Youth Aware and Safe Work Group concentrated efforts on youth’s vulnerability to abuse and exploitation due to the limited sexual abuse and sexual exploitation prevention education being taught in schools. In 2015, the Work Group focused on school-aged youth prevention education through a preliminary Child-Focused Program Analysis; with the overarching objective of gaining a better understanding of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation prevention programs currently being implemented across the country and specifically in Georgia.

More than 25 programs were identified and assessed based on the following parameters:

- target population
- program costs
- format for delivery
- mode of delivery
- size of group receiving the training
- length of time per session and number of sessions.

Additionally, the programs were assessed based on whether they:

- had been evaluated by an independent third party
- are grounded in theory and research
- foster parent, teacher, and community involvement
- follow state standards for in-classroom delivery
- address gender-specific issues
- include additional topics around child safety
- are currently being offered in any Georgia schools.

At the conclusion of the original assessment, the rubric process revealed ten programs that met the baseline criteria and addressed the key components necessary for sexual violence prevention.

As the work continued into 2016, the Work Group conducted an in-depth evaluation of the ten programs including in-person observations of program delivery within the classroom setting. When classroom observations were not available in Georgia, program developers delivered mock presentations to the work group members. From there, the Work Group identified seven programs that most closely aligned with the prevention principles. Results and descriptions of the top seven programs along with the other programs reviewed can be found in Chapter 5.

The Guide’s Target Audience

The Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Guide’s primary intended audience is individuals working in school settings such as school teachers, school counselors, school...
administrators, school medical personnel, etc., and youth-serving organizations/staff.

The guide provides developmentally appropriate educational suggestions for children in grades Pre-K through 12th grade. Early childhood educators and high school teachers alike can benefit from the recommendations and guidelines found throughout the guide.

This guide does not endorse or recommend a particular program. It does, however, provide a list of programs that have met the criteria (listed in Chapter 5). It is up to each school and child-serving organization to assess their specific resources and needs and then decide on a program that best suits their students and community.

*Note: As per Georgia State Board Rule 160-2-4.12, all sex/AIDS instructional materials must be approved by the local sex education review committee and the local board of education before implementation.

This Guide is useful for:

- Classroom teachers and health educators to inform their lesson plans
- Early childhood educators to identify resources for parent education
- School counselors involved in prevention program planning or peer-led prevention strategies with youth
- Curriculum committees or other school or district-wide planning groups engaged in instructional program development
- Principals, superintendents and other administrators planning and identifying resources for providing sexual violence prevention orientation and education opportunities for school personnel
- Youth-serving organizations
- Faith-based organizations with youth programs
- After-school programs
Chapter 2: Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Using What Works

The purpose of this chapter is to provide current child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention best practice information, addressing:

- The Nine Principles of Prevention
- Engaging Community Prevention Partners
- Including Adults in School-Based Prevention
- Responding to Disclosures of Abuse or Assault
- Understanding the Role of a Mandated Reporter

Quick Reference Materials:

⇒ The Social-Ecological Model of Prevention
⇒ The Nine Principles of Prevention
⇒ How to Handle Disclosures
⇒ Who is a Mandated Reporter

It is the responsibility of educational institutions to promote optimal learning environments by ensuring the well-being and safety of their students. However, when child sexual abuse or sexual exploitation threatens that sense of safety the educational process is obstructed. While the challenge of implementing sexual abuse and exploitation prevention into schools may seem formidable due to various roadblocks such as budget cuts, mandated testing standards, or potential resistance from parents about sex being discussed in the classroom, the benefits for this type of prevention outweigh the challenges. Schools are in a unique position to help young people shape positive, healthy attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that work to prevent sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

Prevention in the School Setting

Primary prevention education is essential in the fight against sexual violence within school settings. This type of prevention requires a collaborative effort between the schools and allied community partners such as child advocacy centers, rape crisis programs, local child abuse prevention councils, and other victim services agencies.
To download the full TARG document go to abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/TARG and enter your email in the online form to receive access.

Please contact jwalsh10@gsu.edu with any questions on accessing the full document.