

Second Step – Child Protection Unit USA



Type of intervention



Classroom setting

Target groups, levels of prevention and sub-groups:

Children and Young People (Victims)	Primary prevention Young Children (0-5 Years), Children (6-11 Years), Young People (12-17 Years) Male & Female Classroom Setting Group Work English
Communities / Families	Primary prevention Adults (20 Years +) Male & Female Classroom Setting Group Work English
Situations / Places	Schools and other organisations working with children and young people Classroom Setting Group Work English

Target population

- Staff, children and families in early childhood/preschool programs (children aged 4-5 years)
- Staff, students and families in elementary/primary schools (students aged 5-11 years)
- Staff and families in youth serving and child-care programs

Delivery organisation

The materials comprising the Second Step Child Protection Unit are implemented by staff in the program or school that purchased the Unit. The researched based materials were developed by Committee for Children; a US based non-profit organization whose mission is to foster social emotional development, safety and well-being of children through education and advocacy. The materials can be purchased directly from Committee for Children. Committee for Children material are used widely in the US and some have been translated into several other languages.

Mode and context of delivery

The Second Step Child Protection Unit is delivered in the context of the program or school that purchased the Unit. The leader of the program or head teacher of the school learns via online training how to create and implement a child protection strategy for his or her setting. This strategy includes creating policies and procedures to protect children in that setting specifically from staff sexual misconduct. The strategy also includes training for all staff in child protection, engaging and educating families about child sexual abuse and, if appropriate for the setting, teaching all students self-protection skills through media-rich lessons.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

The unit includes three modules of online training that prepare all staff in what is required to implement a robust child protection strategy. So expertise or a particular professional background are not required. The three modules of training develop the following expertise:

- Module 1: Administrators' ability to assess current child protection policies, procedures, and practices and begin to develop a comprehensive child protection strategy focusing on prevention of staff sexual misconduct.
- Module 2: All staffs' ability to recognize common indicators of child abuse and neglect and recognize staff violations of child protection policies, respond and supportive ways to child who discloses abuse and neglect and report to the authorities when appropriate. In addition staff learn how to talk to a child that someone suspects is being abused and handling disclosures of abuse are addressed.
- Module 3: Teachers' ability to deliver the student lessons and to feel confident teaching content around child sexual abuse prevention.

The adult training modules are designed to be completed before the teaching sessions.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Staff training:

- The Module 1 training takes approximately 60-75 minutes, but the leader or head teacher would then implement their child protection strategy immediately and then revisit it will continue implementation in each year following.
- The Module 2 training takes approximately 75-90 minutes. It is recommended that staff take the training each year.
- The Module 3 training takes approximately 60 minutes depending on grade level. Each year new teachers who will be teaching the lessons will take the training.

Student lessons:

There are six lessons at every grade level, including early childhood. In Early Learning the content is taught through short daily activities and not as one lesson.

Lesson lengths are as follows:

- Early Learning: 5-7 minute daily activities for each week's topic. These activities can be integrated into an existing schedule

- Kindergarten and Grade 1: 20-30 minutes
- Grades 2 and 3: 30-35 minutes
- Grades 4 and 5: 35-40 minutes

Description of intervention

The goals of the Child Protection Unit are to develop staff, adult caregiver and student knowledge and skills for protecting students from unsafe and abusive situations in and outside of school, with a focus on child sexual abuse. Skills for recognizing and reporting abusive situations and responding in a supportive way to students who disclose abuse are also targeted. These goals are accomplished via the Unit's four core components: staff training, student lessons, staff support resources and family education and engagement materials.

Staff Training:

As stated above, the first module of the training helps leaders assess their current child protection policies, procedures and practices and then begin to develop a comprehensive Child Protection Strategy in line with current research and best practices. The second module prepares all staff to recognize common indicators of child abuse and neglect seen in children, as well as recognize staff violations of child protection policies. Staff are also prepared to respond in a supportive way to a child who discloses abuse or neglect and report child abuse or neglect, as well as violations of child protection policies, according to their school's procedures. The third module prepares teachers to deliver the lessons to students.

Student Lessons:

Lesson topics are similar across grades levels and include the following:

- General safety rules (such as wearing a helmet when riding on wheels, using a seatbelt, not playing with fire) and the Ways to Stay Safe (Recognize: Is it safe? Does it break a rule? Refuse: Say words that mean no. Report: Tell a grown-up)
- Always Ask First: Always ask the person in charge before going somewhere, doing something or accepting something from someone
- Safe, unsafe and unwanted touches
- The Touching Rule (ages 4-8) or Private Body Parts Rule (Ages 9-11)
- Practicing staying safe from sexually abusive situations with the Ways to Stay Safe
- Review of all previous lessons using an animation (EL and K), a live action video (G1-3) and an interactive online story (G4 and 5)

The story based lessons are scripted for ease-of-use and are designed to be highly engaging to children. Each story is accompanied by one or more photos or illustrations. In each lesson children practice the specific skills they are learning and learning support is provided through colourful posters, catchy songs and other media content.

Support Resources

The Unit also encourages the development of safe and supportive relationships between students and school staff by providing teachers with techniques for reframing student-behaviour and responding in a supportive way and materials for developing support plans for students experiencing maltreatment or other negative life events.

Family Materials:

As research shows that parents talking to their children is one of the most effective ways to protect children from abuse, the Unit comes with videos and resources specially created to make it easier for families to start the conversation. The short videos cover the facts about child sexual abuse and offenders and their behaviors. They also explain and model ways parents can talk to their children about things like private body parts and safety rules and how to handle it if their child does tell them about sexual abuse. There is also one video specifically designed to address parents' discomfort with their children receiving lessons on child sexual abuse (touching safety). Additional web content expands on the themes in the videos and discusses things parents might want to know more about.

Evaluation

The student lessons in the Child Protection Unit are based on a previous Committee for Children curriculum called Talking about Touching. The Talking about Touching program has been evaluated in several studies and shown to increase student knowledge of personal safety skills.

Committee for Children anticipates that rigorous study of the new Unit will take place in the near future.

References

The Second Step Child Protection Unit is based on the most recent research in child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention, with a specific focus on child sexual abuse. It was developed through rigorous process that included the following:

- Consultation with leading international and national experts on child sexual abuse prevention
- An advisory group of local educators
- An extensive pilot of student lessons in Seattle and Chicago public schools

The Review of Research is available at <http://www.cfchildren.org/child-protection/child-protection-unit.aspx>

Contact details

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