



TEACHING CONSIDERATIONS

Below are teaching considerations and practical tips for delivering sexual abuse prevention education:

1. Remember that for some children a *trusted adult* may not be their parent or family member. There are many adults children can tell if they are sexually abused—adults at home (parents, grandparents, foster parents, other family members), at school (teacher, principal, nurse, counselor) and in communities (mandated reporters: police officers, doctors, nurses, clergy, coaches, after-school or extracurricular activity leaders).
 - a. Encourage children to keep telling different adults until someone *helps* them. Adults may tell children that it is a secret, that it is their fault, that they are not telling the truth, that they believe them but that the behavior is acceptable or that they do not know how to help them. If this happens, children may tell another adult and keep telling until someone *helps* them.
 - b. Instruct children there are special people they can talk with about their feelings – mental health professionals such as counselors or therapists.
 - c. Instruct older students on calling the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-392-3738.
 - d. Children may also call 911 if they are abused – this is considered an emergency.
2. Avoid blaming language such as “don’t let someone hurt you.” Blaming language may make children who have been victimized believe they have done something wrong. They may hesitate to seek help if they believe in any way that they are at fault.
3. Avoid saying that students “must” or “have to” or “should” tell someone if they think something is wrong. Instead, use empowering language that they “can” ask for help. The distinction is important to avoid putting the burden of disclosure on children.
4. Help children understand that touch and physical affection are never a secret.
5. Teach healthy boundaries around physical touch – i.e., asking for permission before touching others and everyone has the right to say “no” to touch. Model this yourself by asking permission before giving a child a hug and by not commanding children to give hugs to others.
6. Use the anatomically correct names for body parts.
7. Avoid telling young children (grades K-2) to identify if a touch is “good,” “bad,” “appropriate,” “inappropriate,” “safe,” “unsafe,” etc. because they are not developmentally able to make these distinctions.
8. Avoid making promises to the child such as “I promise this will never happen to you again” or “I promise I can make it stop.”



9. Inform children that if they have been sexually abused, *any* feeling they have is fine; there are no “wrong” feelings.
10. Be careful not to focus solely on safety techniques for young women (example: don’t walk at night alone, don’t put yourself in risky situations) as this can lead to victim blaming. The fault lies with the perpetrator, not the victim. Focus should be on perpetrator prevention, bystander intervention and teaching all students how to recognize and avoid potentially unsafe situations.
11. Use supportive and non-blaming language to encourage all disclosure, regardless of whether they are a victim, witness/bystander, or perpetrator. Resources for youth with problematic sexual behaviors are available throughout Missouri. Call Missouri Children’s Division to report if a student discloses that he or she has sexually abused another student or child. It benefits the child with sexual behavior problems and his or her family to work with Children’s Division. Youth with problematic sexual behavior who receive appropriate treatment and support are less likely to reoffend.
12. It is important to educate youth about the value of respect and the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships even before they start to date. Youth may not be equipped with the necessary skills to develop and maintain healthy relationships and may not know how to break up in an effective and safe way when necessary. Maintaining open lines of communication may help them form healthy relationships and recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships, thus preventing the violence before it starts. Unhealthy relationships are marked by characteristics such as disrespect and control. It is important for youth to be able to recognize signs of unhealthy relationships before they escalate. Some characteristics of unhealthy relationships include control, hostility, dishonesty, disrespect, dependence, intimidation, physical or sexual violence.
13. During discussions that might bring up cultural differences, emphasize that these differences should not only be tolerated, but respected.
14. This work isn’t for everyone. If you are not comfortable talking about sexual abuse, seek assistance. Students will sense your discomfort and learning will be affected.



Considerations for Students with Disabilities:

- Promote that students express their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways to incorporate multiple communication differences.
 - Examples include but are not limited to pointing, speaking, typing
- For students who are non-speaking, teach multiple ways to communicate “no” to unhealthy actions and to communicate affection, love and friendship.
 - Examples include but are not limited to typing, PECS, sign language, physically leaving the setting
- Special education staff should be included in the teaching to assist in differentiating instruction and promote generalization of the concepts.
- Inclusion of pictures for students with moderate to profound disabilities may be necessary to support learning and retention of the material.
- The inclusion of caregiver education is even more important for students with disabilities due to the need for continued repetition to enhance learning and generalization.
- For students with multiple caregivers, consistent language and the identification of trusted adults is imperative for the safety of these students.
- Special attention should be given to students with mobility needs and movement disorders to promote autonomy, privacy and independence with bathroom skills and other personal needs to provide greater protection to this population.
- The “no” of students with disabilities must be respected, even when it may look different than those of their general education peers.