

PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING ERIN'S LAW

PREPARED BY THE TENNESSEE JOINT TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PURSUANT TO T.C.A. 37.1.601(a)

On March 27, 2014, "Erin's Law" which focuses on preventing child sexual abuse was signed into law in Tennessee and went into effect on July 1, 2014 (Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-601). This law encourages schools across the state to provide age-appropriate instruction to students on personal body safety and how to report sexual abuse, including such abuse which may occur in the child's home for grades K-12. The bill is named after Erin Merryn, an Illinois native who was sexually abused as a child. For more information on Erin's Law, please visit <http://www.tn.gov/sos/acts/108/pub/pc0706.pdf> and www.erinslaw.org.

Tennessee's Joint Task Force (JTF) on Children's Justice and Child Sexual Abuse in partnership with the Department of Children's Services, Department of Education and State Board of Education adopted a set of practice guidelines for Tennessee schools to consider for addressing the issue of child sexual abuse and requirements of Erin's Law. These guidelines are based on the current evidence on the subject. While the guidelines and resources in this document are primarily intended to help school districts, it is the hope of the JTF that other professionals working with children and youth could also use this document as a point of reference.

Practice Guidelines

- Programs should include techniques to teach children to recognize child sexual abuse, equip them with skills to reduce their vulnerability and encourage them to report the abuse.
- Programs should include more than one session, ideally, at least four (Davis & Gidyez, 2000). Recognizing the importance and effectiveness of an environmental design, programs may include such building interventions as visual aids displayed throughout the school, reinforcing the concepts learned within the prevention program (Taylor, Stein, Woods, Mumford & Mennemeier, 2011).
- Programs should be conducted at least annually, building on skills learned the previous year, and should be developmentally appropriate for each grade level.
- Programs should involve children as active learning participants and to be most effective, should include discussion, modeling and role playing (Davis & Gidyez, 2000).
- Programs should have the capacity to be delivered by a wide range of personnel (Barron & Topping, 2010). Acknowledging the varying resources and staffing

patterns of each school, prevention programs should have the capacity to be delivered by a wide range of professionals, including teachers, school counselors, outside agency prevention educators, etc. Professionals delivering these prevention programs should have a thorough knowledge of child sexual abuse, including how to respond appropriately to disclosures.

- Programs should include an evaluation component with measurable outcomes.
- Programs should be culturally sensitive and adaptable for use within varying school contexts (age, race, special needs, etc.).
- Although we recognize that thorough research is limited on the efficacy of specific child sexual abuse prevention programs, we recommend that schools seek to implement programs that include an evidence-based curriculum.
- Programs must include a professional training component for administrators, teachers and other school personnel on talking to students about child sexual abuse prevention, effects of child sexual abuse on children, handling disclosures, and mandated reporting.
- Recognizing that parents play a key role in protecting children from abuse, programs must include a component to encourage parental involvement within the child sexual abuse prevention program. This component should inform parents about child sexual abuse topics including but not limited to characteristics of offenders, grooming behaviors and how to discuss this topic with their children (Kenny, 2010).¹

Child Sexual Abuse Curricula

Erin's law emphasizes the importance of educational programs that help prevent sexual abuse by using age appropriate techniques to instruct children on how to recognize and report sexual abuse. Recognizing the need to provide school personnel with a diversity of curricula and resources, the JTF in partnership with both state departments of Education and Children's Services reviewed a variety of existing prevention curricula; and has identified a number of resources and training for Tennessee public schools. The JTF does not promote any specific prevention curriculum or training, but rather identifies existing resources from state and other agencies on child sexual abuse prevention instruction for grades K-12.

- **Kids on the Block Program**
Audience: Grades K-3
Chattanooga website: <http://www.kidsontheblock.net/>
Nashville - Stars website: <http://starsnashville.org/>

¹ <http://www.erinslawillinois.org/erins-law/the-key-components-of-erins-law/>

This theater format training educates young children about child sexual abuse through the use of puppetry. The program also includes different programs in which the puppets discuss their “personal stories” regarding both physical and sexual abuse. Following the presentation, the puppeteers are trained to address issues related to child abuse and answer questions from the children via the puppets, so that children can clarify any information and gain additional insight into abuse.

- **Safe At Last (offered by Sexual Assault Center)**

Audience: Grades K–6

Website: <http://www.sacenter.org/>

Safe@Last is a sequential personal safety and sexual abuse primary prevention curriculum that empowers students in kindergarten through sixth grade by providing critical skills and tools to increase safety by teaching personal boundaries and assertiveness skills. The research based program includes age-appropriate learning techniques such as role-plays, music, games, stories, videos, and an interactive online workbook to enhance the learning. This elementary and middle school program tackles the tough issues of bullying, peer pressure, and internet safety in addition to teaching sexual abuse prevention. Safe@Last also trains educators to recognize and respond to sexual assault while giving students the knowledge they need to get help if they, or someone they know, have experience sexual abuse.

- **Be Empowered (offered by Sexual Assault Center)**

Audience: Grades 7–12

Website: <http://www.sacenter.org/>

BE! (Be Empowered) is a research based, sexual assault primary prevention curriculum geared towards teens in middle and high school with age appropriate, sequential education presented in an interactive web-based learning environment for both teens and teachers. The core concepts of BE! are Healthy Relationships, Sexual Assault, Bystander Intervention Information, and Technology Safety Skills. BE! is designed to prevent sexual assault as well as assist teens who may have been victimized or are in unsafe situations or relationships by empowering them with the tools they need to make a disclosure and seek help.

- **Michigan Model**

Audience: Grades K–6

Website (safety section): http://www.emc.cmich.edu/EMC_Orchard/family-corner

This training incorporates research-based teaching and learning strategies into every lesson related to child sexual abuse and child safety. The teacher

reference section provides information on types of sexual abuse, potential abusers, and how children can protect themselves.

- **Child Lures Prevention**

Audience: Grades Pre K–12

Website: <http://childluresprevention.com/>

This comprehensive, research-based program teaches age appropriate “Child Lures” and prevention strategies for each lure. In February 2015, the curriculum received approval by the National Educators to Stop Trafficking.

- **Second Step**

Website: <http://www.childtrends.org/?programs=second-step>

Audience: Grades K–5

These interactive online training content lessons include, but are not limited to the following: ways to stay safe, touch safety, and never keep secrets.

- **Empower Me**

Audiences: Grades K–6

Website: <https://gncptc.dcopy.net/product/1020>

This child sexual abuse prevention curriculum is facilitated by a faculty member at Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center. Through the use of a DVD, the faculty member sits down with a group of children to teach them about personal safety. This 30 minute video can be used by parents, teachers and youth-group leaders. The topics covered in this video include but are not limited to the following: checking first with the adult in charge before going anywhere with anyone, listening to their “uh-oh” feelings, and understanding that no touch should ever be a secret.

- **The Yello Dyno Curricula**

Audience: Grades Pre–K–7

Website: <https://www.yellodyno.com/>

Through the use of DVDs and curriculum, the program teaches children with songs and puppets how to protect themselves from abductors, violent kids, drug pushers, abusers, sexual predators and internet predators.

The program is based on a child’s right to be safe and is delivered with memory-enhanced music and specially created videos. The curriculum is available for educators, parents, churches and other community groups to present. The Yello Dyno Method is scientifically based on the research of Nobel Prize recipient Roger Sperry.

- **Sunburst Media Abuse (DVDs)**

- **It's Your Body: You're In Charge (Grades K–2)**
Website: <http://catalog.ncyi.org/products/films/1253023631>

This training is designed to help children understand the “touching rule” and realize that if they experience a bad touch, how to speak up and tell a trusting adult what happened.

- **If It Happens To You: Dealing with Abuse (Grades 3–5)**
Website: <http://www.hrmvideo.com/catalog/if-it-happens-to-you-dealing-with-abuse>

This training explores three (3) types of abuse – physical, verbal, and sexual as seen through the eyes of children. Viewers learn that victims of abuse are not responsible for causing it. They must tell an adult they trust what is happening and continue telling until someone takes action to stop it.

- **Abuse: If it Happens To You (Grades 5 – 9)**
Website: <http://www.libraryvideocompany.com/Abuse-If-It-Happens-To-You-1003982-p/1003982.htm>

This training is designed to help young teens understand that abuse, of all types, is relatively common, and that if it happens to them they must tell a trusted adult. The program examines three (3) different types of abuse: physical, emotional and sexual.

State Prevention Education and Training Opportunities for School Personnel

The JTF also recognizes that school staff needs prevention training too. School personnel are a common reporter of child abuse and neglect, and are one of the most important groups in the prevention and recognition of child sexual abuse. Despite this, not every school counselor, teacher or administrator receives child sexual abuse training or coursework. The following is a list of agencies/organizations in Tennessee that school districts can utilize to train school personnel who interact with children and youth on how to prevent, recognize, and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse.

- **Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs)**

This resource has several advantages in that there are 47 CACs serving children and families across the state with expert staff in child abuse and many of them currently provide child sexual abuse training to students and teachers annually

or upon request. To locate a CAC near you, please click on the following link:
www.tncac.org

- **Department of Children's Services (DCS)**
Website: <https://www.tn.gov/dcs>

The DCS is Tennessee's public child welfare agency. The Department investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect in partnership with community partners such as Child Advocacy Centers, law enforcement, schools, and other agencies. DCS offers a self-paced online training on how to report and recognize child abuse and neglect on their websites. Also, you may contact your local/regional DCS office to request training on how to prevent, recognize and respond appropriately to child abuse.

- **Department of Education**
Website: <https://www.tn.gov/education>
- **Kid Central TN**
Website: www.kidcentraltn.com

This state government website offers a wealth of information and resources, not only for Tennessee families related to child development, education, health, and supportive services, but also provide resources for school personnel on identifying, preventing and reporting child abuse and neglect.

- **Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee**
Website: www.pcat.org

This organization is a leader in building awareness and providing education to the general public and to everyone involved in the effort to prevent the abuse and neglect of Tennessee's children.

- **Sexual Assault Center of East Tennessee**
Website: <http://www.mcnabbcenter.org/sacet>

This center is located in Knoxville and serves 15 counties. The center provides services for survivors of sexual assault and helps empower communities through education and social change.

- **Sexual Assault Center**
Website: www.sacenter.org

This center is located in Nashville and is dedicated to providing counseling to child and adult sexual assault victims. In addition, they have programs that educate students on how to recognize and prevent sexual assault.

- **Shelby County Rape Crisis Center**

Website: <https://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/index.aspx?NID=737>

This center is located in Memphis and provides services to victims of all ages. In addition, they have programs that educate students on how to recognize and prevent sexual assault.

- **Stewards of Children Training**

This training program/curriculum is designed to educate and motivate adults to prevent, recognize, and respond to childhood sexual abuse. The accompanying workbook and video/DVD use the principles of choice, consciousness, and personal power. These principles are used to promote an understanding of the nature and impact of childhood sexual abuse and to provide a context for empowered action. Steward of Children also incorporates the 5 Steps to Protecting our Children, Darkness to Light's core educational tool for sexual abuse prevention. This training program is appropriate not only for systems and organizations who work with children, but also for individuals and other groups who want to respond to the epidemic nature of child sexual abuse at all levels of society. For more information about this training, please contact Prevent Child Abuse of Tennessee at www.pcat.org or the Tennessee Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers at www.tncac.org.

- **Tennessee Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers (TNCAC)**

Website: www.tncac.org

TNCAC is a statewide membership organization dedicated to helping communities, through local child advocacy centers; respond to allegations of child abuse.

- **Tennessee Voices for Victims**

Website: www.tnvoicesforvictims.org

This victim advocate organization services includes in-service training for teachers and parents, as well as presentations for middle and high school on such topics as child sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexting, internet dangers and acquaintance rape. In addition they are trained to facilitate the child sexual abuse curriculum Darkness to Light. Over the last 15 years they have presented

hundreds of programs for teachers, students, and the general public on these topics.

In Tennessee, anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected has a legal obligation to report it. For more information on these laws and reporting child abuse please visit the Joint Task Force website at:

https://www.sworps.tennessee.edu/child_abuse_reporting/start.html and the DCS website at <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/reporting-abuse-faq>;

Resource Listings of Selected National Organizations

- **Darkness to Light**

Website: www.d2l.org

This programs raise awareness of the prevalence and consequences of child sexual abuse by educating adults about the steps they can take to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to the reality of child sexual abuse.

- **Prevent Child Abuse America**

Website: www.preventchildabuse.org

This national organization was founded in 1972 in Chicago, and works to promote the healthy development of children and prevent child abuse before it can occur in order to help children to grow up and contribute in their communities. In addition, you can find published information and resources on child sexual abuse on the website.

- **National Children's Advocacy Center**

www.nationalcac.org

This national website offers information on the prevention of child sexual abuse such as recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse, child sexual exploitation and free online training for professionals who work with children.

- **Stop It Now!**

Website: www.stopitnow.org

This national nonprofit organization employs a public health approach to preventing the perpetration of child sexual abuse. Through its public education, public policy, and research programs, this organization reaches families where a parent, child, or other relative may be at risk to abuse a child; abusers themselves; and those at risk to abuse; helping them to stop or prevent the sexual abuse and seek help.

