

Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children

Service Delivery Manual

Sexual assault of children is much more common than is generally believed. Some experts estimate that as many as 1,000,000 children are sexually assaulted each year in the United States.

Child molesters are attracted to children. Mentoring programs are doubly attractive because of the one-to-one nature of the program and because the children in our program are more vulnerable to abuse due to their poor self-image, lack of parental supervision and when they have a history of previous abuse.

Efforts at prevention begin with the recognition that the issue is a serious one. Next, staff receives specific training in all facets of child sexual assault. We do everything possible to screen out potential abusers. We work with mothers and their children to orient them to child safety preparation. Finally, staff and mother (parent or guardian included, will use mother in recognition of the majority but recognize the diversity of family structure represented in the program) are aware of the indicators of potential abuse and carefully follow up on any suspicious signs or symptoms.

During every home visit interview with a Mentee, the subject of sexual abuse is discussed. During the portion of the home visit interview with the mother, all mothers are asked if their child has ever been molested or approached in a suspicious manner. Mothers are asked if they are comfortable talking with their children about sex in general and sexual abuse in particular.

Regardless of mother's response, each is asked if our staff may talk with her child about the subject. Mother is asked if she would like to be present during this discussion or whether she would prefer that the agency staff talk to the child alone. In general we would like to discuss the subject with mother and child together as a means of enhancing communication on this subject.

In talking to children about sexual abuse, the agency staff starts the conversation by asking the child if he/she has ever talked to anyone about sexual abuse or molestation. This is done in an attempt to find out the child's level of awareness of the issue. More and more we are finding that children have an awareness of the subject. If there is little awareness, then the agency staff introduces the subject by talking about general safety rules and "what if" situations. The concepts of "good touch" and "uncomfortable touch" are explained and reinforced. The intent is to encourage the child to report to mother, agency staff or trusted friend any behavior or situations he/she may be uncomfortable about or uncertain how to handle. The intent is to open communication. The child is taught that he/she has the right to say no to anybody when it comes to his/her own body. This includes Mentor, teachers,

stepparents, etc.

When this topic is introduced, it is possible that current or previous incidents may be revealed. The agency staff is alert to observe behavioral signs in the mother or child that may suggest a previous history of sexual abuse. If anything is suspected or revealed, the immediate situation is addressed as the facts present themselves. In addition, the mother is informed of our status as a mandated reporter and that a report is to be filed.

In all cases of suspected abuse or neglect of any kind, agency staff must inform their Supervisor/Manager as soon as possible. All mandated reports are to also be reported to the (fill in reporting chain for staff here) Director of Clinical Services, VP for Program Services, and President and CEO. In the case of a mandated report where the Mentor is the alleged abuser, agency Legal Counsel, the Program Committee Chair, the Board Chair, the agency insurance company representative, and affiliated programs per their guidelines are informed.

Mothers are informed that after a match is made that the agency will remain in regular contact with her and her child through Match Support calls. She is encouraged to call Match Support at any time if she is concerned about the match relationship. Our intent here is to keep lines of communication open.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING

It is the policy of this agency to do everything possible to screen out child molesters. Parts of the prospective Mentor interview process are specifically geared to reveal information that would indicate high risk candidates and known molesters.

There is a growing base of information about molesters. Much of what is known about molesters and potential molesters is oriented around their sexual behavior and their peer relationships. These areas are extensively explored in the interview process.

There are indicators or "red flags" that some molesters show. When a Mentor shows any "red flags", they are carefully explored in the interview. The prospective Mentor has to earn the caseworker's endorsement before he/she can become a Mentor. If a caseworker has doubts about a candidate that cannot be resolved in the interview process, the individual will not be accepted as a Mentor.

"Red Flags" in Detecting Potential Sexual Abuse in Mentoring Programs

The following is a list of "red flags" for the Prospective Mentor screening process:

Specific Areas of Concern in Screening Out the Potential Child Molester

1. Over-investment in children - involved in other activities that bring him/her into contact with children such as teaching, scouting, church groups, etc.
2. Over-identification with children - in his/her interaction with children, he/she regresses to their level of behavior, he/she relinquishes adult role and responsibility, tends to become more like the child.
3. Failure to set limits for Little - overindulges child, allows child to do as he/she wants without constructive supervision.
4. Animation around children—eyes light up. Expression heightens, specifically to children.
5. Premium on one-to-one activities - prefers low visibility activities to those involving a group.
6. Indication of anxiety regarding adult sexuality.
7. Adverse or extremely judgmental attitude towards gay and lesbian sexual orientation. Strong revulsion toward homosexuality suggesting rigid and judgmental thinking and/or possibly hinting at own insecurity regarding sexuality.
8. Candidate describes desired Mentee very specifically - emphasizes interest in children with certain physical or emotional characteristics, e.g. wants "clean" child or one with no brothers or sisters; the candidate may have a specific preference for age, or body type, or may ask to work with a "withdrawn child" or a "more disorganized family" or "no parent" or "no father involved in family."
9. Candidate who is overly anxious to obtain match immediately, is impatient with the process.
10. Absence of appropriate peer relationships - confines circle of friends to

11. Any history of being abused, neglected or sexually victimized.
12. Character immaturity - shy, withdrawn, passive, nonassertive.
13. Police record. An attitude that "rules" are for other people and do not necessarily apply to them.
14. Candidate's dating history or sexual development does not follow a reasonably "normal" pattern.
15. Candidate does not have meaningful relationships with other adults or in case of high school students, peer relationships.
16. Candidate does not relate to the interviewer in a socially appropriate way or the interviewer is uncomfortable and is unable to put his/her finger on the reason.
17. Single male or female over 35, never having been married or without history of long term relationships with a partner.
18. Candidate has found his/her own Mentee and tries to get the agency to "legitimize" the match.
19. Premature separation from military service.
20. Indefinite reasons for not being satisfied with or suddenly terminating volunteer involvement in other youth organizations e.g., Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA/YWCA.
21. Abuse or regular use of alcohol.
22. Large number of lower echelon jobs with no ambition for responsibility or advancement, avoidance of decision making

23. A long history of moving from job to job or place to place.
24. History of having difficulty in dealing with stress.
25. Requests to be matched with more than one Mentee at a time.
26. Extreme age difference in sexual partners.
27. Wife or girlfriend is extremely dependent or passive, and candidate has a "protective" role.
28. Candidate describes himself/herself as a victim of the forces around him/her; abdicates normal sense of responsibility or control of his/her own situation, describes himself /herself as a pawn.

In addition to the interview process, the agency requires three references and a State CORI/SORI on all Potential Mentor Candidates.

MATCH SUPPORT SUPERVISION

****Please note that It is not possible to screen out all potential abusers.**
In particular the certain types of offenders may show no signs in the interview process. There is no known profile of a child molester and they are from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, it is essential that agency staff and Match Advocates be aware of and watch for any indication of possible abuse through the match supervision process. Our goal is to be able to intervene at the earliest possible moment should abuse occur. Below is a list of indicators that, when present, should be explored.**

Areas for Match Advocates to Watch During Match Support to Detect Occurrence of Molestation

1. Volunteer is anxious to have child spend the night or take overnight

2. Volunteer finds own child and comes to the agency to have the match legitimized.
3. Volunteer involves other same sex children on outings with his/her Little.
4. Volunteer is very cooperative with agency staff, stops by the office to talk, makes an unusually large number of calls to Match Support, sends an unusually high number of emails, etc.
5. The match seems to have more outings in the evening hours.
6. Volunteer shows child sex magazines or sex web sites or wants to introduce ideas of sex "education" to the Mentee.
7. Any rapid or significant change in the child's behavior at home, with Mentor, in school performance, etc.
8. Volunteer is going through stressful period in his/her life.
9. Volunteer or Little wants to terminate the match without specified reason.
10. Excessive physical contact with the child, i.e., wrestling, tickling, and hugging; teaches activities that involve considerable physical contact such as swimming, wrestling and dancing.
11. Volunteer asking Mentee to pose for pictures.
12. Volunteer does not seem to respond to Mentee complaints about too much sedentary time, i.e. spending time in front of television at Mentor's apartment or Mentee's house.
13. Over-investment in Mentee.
14. Volunteer gets into "childish" arguments with Mentee, acting at the child's level, not adult.
15. Excessive or expensive gift giving, particularly gift giving not associated with birthdays and religious holidays.
16. Mentee becomes secretive about match activities. Mentor encourages Little to "break the rules".
17. Sudden unexplained changes in relationship between Mentor and Mentee.

18. Volunteer involves other same-sex adults on outings with Mentee.
19. Volunteer who does not want to leave town to take another job because he/she does not want to leave his/her Mentee.
20. Mother of Mentee is uncomfortable about the Mentor.
21. The Match Advocate is uneasy or has a hunch about the match.
22. Mentee is reluctant to tell about a specific activity with Mentor.
23. Mentee avoids Mentor by missing scheduled outings, being late, wanting always to bring a friend or brother along or forgetting appointments.
24. Mentee asks unusual or explicit questions about sex.
25. Mentee displays inappropriate knowledge of sex for his/her age.

The agency maintains a list of known child molesters as well as those strongly suspected or considered high risk candidates. This information is carefully protected to protect the rights of the innocent, but will be used to assure that no person known to us as a molester or suspected molester will be inadvertently matched with a child.

APPROACH TO SUSPECTED ABUSE WHEN VOLUNTEER IS BELIEVED TO BE THE ABUSER/PERPETRATOR

All suspicions of abuse of a child whether it be sexual, physical or psychological will be reported to the Department of Child and Family Services under the mandated reporting laws. In all cases where a child reports any abuse, the agency's position will be to fully believe the child's initial report and to base all of its actions on what the child reports in order to fully protect the child and to advocate for his/her rights, until otherwise conclusively shown to be false.

Determination of guilt or innocence is the responsibility of law enforcement and the courts. False reports of abuse are very rare in our experience. Much greater harm can come to a victim who is not believed than can come from our agency believing the rare false report.

When any allegation of abuse by a Mentor is made, the match will be immediately suspended pending further investigation. The Mentor is informed that he/she is to have no contact with the Mentee or the Mentee's family until further notice. Any attempt on the part of the Mentor to contact

child's family.

Our strong stand on child advocacy applies to any situation of abuse from any source, not just a Mentor or a family member. We have encountered situations where a Mentor candidate has revealed his participation in child abuse during a screening interview. All such abuse information is to be reported to the a (fill in reporting chain for agency) Supervisor/Manager and/or the Director of Clinical Services or the VP for Program Services and/or President and CEO for a decision as to a course of action.

When Dealing with a Suspected Molestation

1. It is very important that you believe the child.
2. Be sure to let the child know that he/she did the right thing to tell you.
3. Don't panic or show how horrible an act you may think it to be. Your initial reaction will be a key to the child as to how they should view the incident.
4. Don't presume that the child has not been harmed.
5. **ADVOCATE.** It is your responsibility to be sure that the child is protected. Don't presume that anyone else will act. Follow up and follow through yourself with guidance of your supervisor/manager.
6. You are a mandated reporter. If at all possible, consult your (fill in agency titles) Supervisor/Manager, Director of Clinical Services, VP for Program Services or President and CEO before filing a mandated report.
7. Make every effort to bring the incident to the surface and get appropriate support and possible prosecution.
8. When confronting the abuser don't ask, but tell him/her with authority, what the child has reported; don't leave room for any doubt that you believe the child.
9. All of your behavior on behalf of the child is part of reassuring the child that he/she will be protected. One of the long-term effects of the incident is not its sexual impact but one of security and trust.
10. Do not punish the child for telling. Assure the child that he/she has done nothing wrong.
11. Support the parent and provide appropriate professional follow-up to the

12. The agency will provide trainings on the subject of child sexual abuse. Educate yourself about child abuse. Get in touch with and gain control of your own feelings before you have to deal with the feelings and reactions of others.
13. Realize that when you have to deal with this subject, you will probably feel miserable. Be sure that you have a support system too. Reach out to co-workers, supervisors, managers, etc. if you need help.
14. Don't hesitate to ask for help when dealing with a potential situation; when in doubt, contact your supervisor/manager or any agency manager.