

Policy Proposal of Sexually Abused Children

Alice E. Flanagan

Longwood University

SOWK 300

Professor Daniels

April 7, 2021

Abstract

This paper addresses the concerns of a vulnerable population that takes an interest in children who are victims of sexual abuse. Since child sexual abuse (CSA) is the topic of this paper; it is important to comprehend the definition of what is child sexual abuse. Fortsen et al. (2016) defines child sexual abuse as, “Inducing or coercing a child to engage in sexual acts. It includes behaviors such as fondling, penetration, and exposing a child to other sexual activities” (p. 8). The subject at the beginning of this paper will compose of the identification of public health in its three levels of prevention. The two strategies that this paper will go into further detail about are school-based educational prevention programs that are child-focused based and the other is adult-focused with skills training. Then to follow with child-focused education and program prevention of how and what to do to say from being sexually abused. The policy preventions will be concentrated on teachers discussing to students that there will be avoidance of sexual abuse occurring in the future and for the infinite generations to come. Another policy prevention is constructing programs, like Protecting God’s Children. In the following paragraph, it is mentioned which policy prevention I would prefer, along with who I would seek for support in this proposal. In conclusion for the proposal, I would implement information to win over stakeholders.

Keywords: child; child sexual abuse; CSA; education; policies; prevention programs; sexual abuse

When identifying the three levels of prevention for child sexual abuse in the field of public health, they are consisted of: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Plummer and Klein (2013) use the terminology of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention when discussing the intensity of sexual abuse behaviors. The primary prevention is defined as the prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA) that addresses actions, behaviors, and norms before the abuse is committed. Jansson (2018) expresses, “In secondary prevention, persons with a specific problem are given assistance in its early stages, thus averting a full-blown or serious problem” (p. 229). “Tertiary prevention aims to arrest a well-developed problem by using interventions that stop it from evolving further into a catastrophic condition” (Jansson, 2018, p. 229). The second and tertiary prevention attempts to communicate the issues and responses after the abuse have been carried out. The goals of these efforts are to help acknowledge safety and healthy results for persons and society affected by child mishandling and avoid abuse from arising again in the forthcoming.

According to Committee for Children (2016), “Research shows that the two most effective ways to prevent child sexual abuse are through education and training focused on adults and programming focused on skills training in children” (p. 3). When it comes to preventing child sexual abuse, there should be child-focused skills training emphasizing the goals to empower children with increased knowledge of strategies and skills that can avoid victimization and to build an atmosphere that could result in an increased disclosure when abuse does occur. According to The National Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation has created six pillars of prevention as a guide for policymakers to create effective policies, which are: strengthening youth serving organizations sexual abuse and exploitation prevention capacity, supporting healthy development of children, promoting healthy relationships and sexuality education for children and youth, ending the demand for children as sexual commodities,

sustaining funds for prevention, and lastly, prevent the initial perpetration of CSA and exploitation (as cited in Committee for Children, 2016).

There have been multiple programs that are directed towards children when it comes to preventing child sexual abuse. Manheim et al. (2019) lists the different programs that are child-focused, which are: Body Safety Training (BST), Parents as Teachers of Safety (PaTS), Safer and smarter kids, Safe Touches, and concluding with Talking about Touching. Body Safety Training is identified as a personal safety skill program for children of young ages, which has objective goals varying from they are allowed to touch their own bodies and nobody else should be touching or looking at their genitals, even if it is kept as a secret. PaTS is a program working with preschool-aged children that parents or training leaders, that obtain a master's degree in counseling or related fields, should teach children the appropriate names for genitals. The PaTS program has shown improvements with communication within both parents and children, and children have a better comprehension of CSA and the ability for safety. Safe Touches is a personal safety training that was implemented in New York City public classrooms since 2007. Safe Touches was developed by a nonprofit organization. "This program is designed for children in kindergarten through third grade and involves a one-time 50-minute interactive workshop to help children learn and practice safety skills" (Manheim, 2018, p. 750). Safer and smarter kids' curriculum for educating children about their personal safety consists of how to recognize risky situations which allows them to have opportunities to practice safe behavior in a cautious environment of six 30-minute-long lectures. Talking about Touching's program features 16 lessons lasting between 15- and 30-minutes teaching children's regulations about making careful decision making of who to trust and who not to trust with others. All these prevention programs have the common theme of learning about how one should be in control of their own genitals and how they should not be touching other's private parts. It is recommended that children start

obtaining the education of sexual abuse at a younger age and continue with the repetition as they get older. Although these programs are not 100% effective, they do help by assisting children to become aware and gain knowledge of their own bodies. Research has shown that the more a child is exposed to comprehension of this topic, the better armed the child will be with skills.

For adults, there should be awareness of skills training when approaching a child who is a victim of sexual abuse. One of the most popular training programs, for adults being aware of child sexual abuse, is called Protecting God's Children. "The ultimate goal of most child sexual abuse prevention programs is to change the behavior of adults in ways that will lower rates of abuse" (Nurse, 2017, p. 610). In the Protecting God's Children program, as of 2004, it is required that in the United States all important members of the Catholic church are required to provide training for grown authorities who have the desire to work or volunteer with minors in an institutional setting. This formation includes a variety range of adults that include teachers, clergy, classroom assistance, Sunday educational staff, and other mentors. Clark et al. (2020) states, "Protecting God's Children, which is a 3-hour long training is valid for 5 years" (para. 4).

When prompt to make a decision out of the two options of whether to have child-focused programs and preventions or adult-focused programs and preventions, I would go with child-focused programs. There is a lot more research that has been conducted and positive improvements for the awareness of child sexual abuse. Positive results have shown that children, who are considered a vulnerable population and are under the assumption that they would not understand, are comprehending the issue and looking child sexual abuse as an issue instead of what their perpetrator was brainwashing them with information. In this proposal, I would hope to seek support from other policy advocates who are looking into the same mindset as myself, and politicians who do see child sexual abuse as a problem that needs to be addressed and fixed.

In conclusion when addressing this social problem, of child sexual abuse, to stakeholders there will be a lot of questions asking why does this issue matter. When answering why to the stakeholders, policy advocates will have to stand up for the child and speak on their behalf about how CSA hurts: the economy by funding for services; families of the victim are unable to do the hardship alone; and health conditions can permanently impact the child mentally, emotionally, and physically. In order to convince stakeholders about the issue, one of the strategies is to “Prioritize evidence-based solutions to prevent child abuse” (National Association of County & City Health Officials, 2016, p. 9). When doing formal research on this issue, the National Association of County & City Health Officials (2016) emphasize solutions when creating a policy, the following:

Advocating for evidence-based programs; advocate for Federal, State, and Local legislation to support families; address social determinants of health in programs and policies; establish positions, policies, legislation to prevent child abuse and neglect; and advocate for funding and resource support for those who are victims of child sexual abuse (p. 8).

The National Association of County & City Health Officials (2016) also bring up solutions when mentioning on an individual level, which are: “increasing education and awareness about child sexual abuse and neglect prevention; developing and sharing compelling stories within local communities and nationally; and engaging within communities to promote resilience” (p. 8).

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