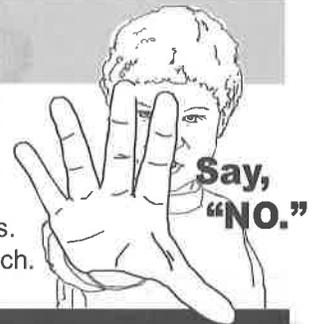




# LESSON 7

## Staying Personally Safe

Student Learning Objectives:	National Health Education Standards:
1. Describe the characteristics of appropriate and inappropriate touch.	• Core Concepts
2. Explain that a child is not at fault if someone touches him or her in an inappropriate way.	• Core Concepts
3. Apply strategies to avoid personally unsafe situations.	• Self Management
4. Demonstrate how to ask trusted adults for help.	• Accessing Information
5. Apply strategies to get away in cases of inappropriate touching or abduction.	• Self Management



### Lesson Synopsis

Review the previous safety lesson on getting emergency help. Watch a video that discusses personal safety. Explain a rule for what to do if in an unsafe situation. Discuss safety strategies. Practice saying, "No." Identify helpful adults. Review the rule for avoiding bad or confusing touch.

Activity	Time in Minutes	Materials Needed
Introduction	1	• None
Teacher Input	23	<p>Health Education Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video [VHS or DVD]: <i>What Tadoo With Secrets</i>, J. Gary Mitchell Film Co. (18 minutes)</li> <li>• Personal Safety Cards for Grade One: "Two Frogs," "Three Pigs," and "Kids in Swim Suits," Educational Materials Center</li> <li>• Poster: "The Three D's for Telling," Educational Materials Center (Extension Activity)</li> <li>• Poster: "Say, 'NO!'" Educational Materials Center</li> </ul> <p>Teacher Manual Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Reference: "Teaching Personal Safety"</li> <li>• Teacher Reference: "What to Do If a Student Discloses Abuse"</li> </ul> <p>Supplied by the Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AV equipment</li> </ul>
Application or Skill Practice	4	• None
Closure	2	<p>Teacher Manual Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Reference: "Sample Family Letter Following the Personal Safety Lesson"</li> <li>• Family Resource Sheet: "Child Sexual Abuse: What Every Family Should Know"</li> <li>• Family Resource Sheet: "What You Can Do to Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse"</li> </ul>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	

## Preparation

Prior to the Lesson:

- **Send** a letter to parents two weeks before teaching this lesson notifying them of the plans for this lesson. This will give them the opportunity to preview the video if they wish. A sample letter is located in Lesson 1 of this unit.
- **Read** the teacher references, "Teaching Personal Safety" and "What to Do If a Student Discloses Abuse."
- **Preview** the video.

For Teacher Input:

- **Display** the poster, "Say, 'NO!'"

For Closure:

- **Personalize and then duplicate** the teacher reference, "Sample Family Letter Following the Personal Safety Lesson," for students to take home.
- **Duplicate** the family resource sheets, "Child Sexual Abuse: What Every Family Should Know" and "What You Can Do to Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse," for students to take home.



**Time-Saver Tip:** The discussion following the video is critical. However, the length of the video and the discussion make this lesson longer than most. Your students might remain attentive given that 18 minutes is a video. If you are worried that students will be unable to sit through the video and the discussion, provide a break after the video for a short movement activity. Then, return to the discussion.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

**Introduction:** Review when and how to get emergency help. Introduce the topic of personal safety.

Approximately 1 minute

Instructional Steps	Script & Detailed Directions	Extensions & Suggestions
<p>Review the definition of emergency and how to get emergency help.</p>	<p><i>In our last health lesson, we talked about emergencies. <b>Who can tell me what an emergency is?</b></i></p> <p>Answer: If someone or something is in danger of being badly hurt or killed and needs special help, it is an emergency.</p> <p><i><b>If there is an emergency and an adult isn't near by, what should you do?</b></i></p> <p>Answer: Phone 911.</p> <p><i><b>Who can tell me what to say when you make an emergency phone call?</b></i></p> <p>Answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "This is an emergency.</li> <li>2. My name is _____.</li> <li>3. My address is _____.</li> <li>4. My phone number is _____.</li> <li>5. The emergency is: _____."</li> </ol>	 <p>As a classroom teacher, you are a resource and support for students on a daily basis and the best person to teach this lesson on child sexual abuse. If you are uncomfortable teaching this topic, see if the counselor or another teacher would help you. Children need this information and will respond best if it is presented in a reassuring manner.</p>

State the focus of the lesson.	Today we will talk about another time when you need to get help. We will learn how to stay safe if something happens to you that scares you, hurts you, or makes you feel uncomfortable.	
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**Teacher Input:** Watch and discuss a video that talks about the importance of telling trusted adults about incidents of inappropriate touching until someone believes and helps the child. Explain the rule for what to do in these situations. Discuss prevention strategies and what to do if a stranger tries to abduct a child.

Approximately 23 minutes

Instructional Steps	Script & Detailed Directions	Extensions & Suggestions
Introduce and show the video, <i>What Tadoo With Secrets</i> .	<p>We have a video to watch today. It is about an important topic: touch.</p> <p>After the video, we'll talk about it.</p> <p>Show the video.</p>	 <p>Using a video for this content area is often the most comfortable approach for students and the teacher. However, finding appropriate media is challenging. An extensive search was conducted for recent videos that met our criteria prior to the revision of the <i>Michigan Mode</i>®. This video was selected. If you know of media that you would like us to consider, please review the criteria on the Educational Materials Center website and respond to the webmaster with your suggestion.</p> <p><a href="http://www.emc.cmich.edu/videos">www.emc.cmich.edu/videos</a></p>
Discuss the video.	<p>At the beginning of the video, Julliet's Mom asked her why she wasn't riding her new bike. Julliet didn't tell her the truth. <b>Why do you think Julliet was afraid to tell her Mom the truth?</b></p> <p>Answers: She was afraid to tell her Mom that Uncle Dan had been touching her. He told her to be quiet. Julliet was afraid it was her fault and that she'd been bad.</p>	 <p>It is unlikely a child will disclose abuse during a classroom presentation. However, if this occurs, remain calm, acknowledge the disclosure, resume the lesson, and follow up with the student after the lesson. See the teacher reference, "What to Do If a Student Discloses Abuse," for more information.</p> 

Continue the discussion using the personal safety card, "Three Pigs," to distinguish between good and bad secrets.

Hold up the personal safety card, "Three Pigs."

***If you remember the story about these pigs, say, "Oink." What didn't these pigs do?***

Answer: They didn't tell.

*There were three different types of things they didn't tell.*

*The first pig didn't tell about private things. Private things are things that don't hurt anyone and you don't have to share.*

***Let's list some things that are private.***

Answers: going to the bathroom, writing in a diary, changing clothes, bathing, and so on

*The next pig didn't tell about a surprise. What is a surprise?*

Answers: a good secret to keep until the right time, makes people happy

***Tell me some examples of some surprises or good secrets.***

Answers: birthday presents, gifts, special trips, surprise parties, and so on

*The third pig didn't tell about a bad secret. How do we know when something is a bad secret?*

Answers: It hurts, can never be told, makes people feel bad, makes you afraid, and so on

Practice telling good secrets from bad secrets.

*Let's practice deciding whether something is a good secret or a bad secret. I will tell you about a secret. If you think it is a good secret, give me a thumbs up sign. If you think it's a bad secret, show me a thumbs down sign. Ready?*

- *I made a Mother's Day card for my mom. [good secret]*
- *The big kid down the street stole my football and told me not to tell. [bad secret]*
- *My class bought some flowers for the teacher's birthday. [good secret]*
- *My neighbor asked me to take off my clothes. [bad secret]*

*You know how to tell a good secret from a bad secret.*



Take the opportunity to reinforce the Three D's for Telling that was taught in Lesson 5 of this unit.

<p>Continue the discussion using the personal safety card, "Two Frogs," to reinforce telling an adult.</p> <p>List people students could tell.</p>	<p>Hold up the personal safety card, "Two Frogs."</p> <p><b>Put your hand on your head if you remember these two frogs. What are their names?</b></p> <p>Answers: "What" and "Tadoo"</p> <p><b>What did Julliet learn from What and Tadoo?</b></p> <p>Answer: She learned that telling an adult the truth can help her deal with her problem.</p> <p><b>How do you think Julliet felt after talking to her Mom?</b></p> <p>Answers: better, safer, stronger, less afraid</p> <p><i>If something happens to you that hurts you, scares you, or makes you feel uncomfortable, you need to TELL someone like your parents or another trusted adult. If anyone makes you promise to keep a secret because they touched you or made you touch them, you need to TELL someone. Even if it happened a long time ago, TELL someone right away.</i></p> <p><b>Let's make a list of people who live in the same house as we do that we could tell if something like this happens.</b></p> <p>Write a list on one side of the board.</p> <p><b>Now let's make a list of people who don't live in the same house as we do that we could tell.</b></p> <p>Write the list on the other side of the board.</p> <p><b>Tell me what you should do if the person you tell doesn't believe you.</b></p> <p>Answer: Keep telling until someone believes you.</p>	 <p>If you suspect a child in your classroom is being abused or if a student discloses abuse, including sexual abuse, you are responsible for reporting it to Child Protective Services. Review your legal obligations on the teacher reference, "What to Do If a Student Discloses Abuse."</p>
<p>Continue the discussion using the personal safety card, "Kids in Swimsuits."</p> <p>Discuss confusing touch.</p>	<p>Hold up the personal safety card, "Kids in Swimsuits."</p> <p><i>Confusing touches sometimes give us "Uh-Oh" feelings. We have these feelings when things just don't seem right. For example, if someone tried to touch you on the private parts of your body you might have an "Uh-Oh" feeling to warn you that things were not right. The private parts of your body are the parts covered by your swimsuit. Or, if someone tried to make you touch them on their private parts, you might have an "Uh-Oh" feeling.</i></p> <p><i>No one should touch your private parts, except for a doctor or nurse who is helping you while a parent or guardian is in the room. Parents and other caring adults might help you take care of your body if there is something you can't do for yourself yet.</i></p>	 <p>Some students may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed during this lesson. Acknowledge that many people feel uncomfortable when talking about their bodies and touching. While these feelings are normal, this topic is an important one to discuss.</p>

Explain the rule for what to do using the poster, "Say, 'NO!'"

*We need to trust our "Uh-Oh" feelings and follow the rule. The rule asks us to do four very important things.*

1. Say, "No," in a strong voice.
2. Get away. Sometimes you have to yell.
3. Tell someone.
4. Keep telling until someone believes you.

*This kind of feeling should not be kept a secret, even if someone asks you to, or threatens to hurt you or a member of your family. It's more important to get help than to keep a bad secret.*

*No matter who a person is, if he or she touches you in a way that feels bad or uncomfortable, tell an adult you trust.*

*And remember what Professor Von Carp says: If something like this ever happens to you, it's not your fault.*

State the four parts of the rule with the students.

1. Say, "No," in a strong voice.
2. Get away. Sometimes you have to yell.
3. Tell someone.
4. Keep telling until someone believes you



Tell students that using the rule is the best way to avoid being hurt, but unfortunately it doesn't work every time. It is still important to keep saying, "No!" and trying to get away. Afterward, students should tell a trusted adult about what happened.



Have students pair up and tell each other what they would tell a friend about personal safety if the friend missed this lesson.

Discuss strangers and abduction.

*Let's talk about one more thing—how to act around strangers.*  
**Who is a stranger?**

Answer: someone you don't know

*A stranger is someone you and your parents don't know, and you don't know where they live. Some people are strangers, even if you have seen them before.*

**What is a good rule for talking or going with strangers?**

Answer: Don't talk to strangers or go with strangers.

Introduce the idea of having a family password.

*Let's imagine that someone in your family asked someone you don't know to pick you up from school. One way you could know that it is okay to go with this person is if the person knows your family's password.*

**Raise your hand if you think you know what a family password is.**

Answer: It is any word you and your parents decide you will use to determine if someone is safe to go with.

*If a stranger or a friend doesn't know the password, don't go with them.*

**What might be some possible passwords?**

Answers: the name of your teddy bear, a silly word



Children abused in their home may not be able to get away. However, it is important to describe options for "getting away" in order to help students protect themselves as much as possible.

<p>Discuss what it means to “get away” from different places.</p>	<p><i>If you and your parents don't have a password, go home tonight and decide on one.</i></p> <p><b>What should we do if a stranger wants us to go with him or her?</b></p> <p>Answer: Ask for the password. If the person doesn't know it, follow the rule.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Say, “No,” in a strong voice.</li> <li>2. Get away. Sometimes you have to yell.</li> <li>3. Tell someone.</li> <li>4. Keep telling until someone believes you.</li> </ol> <p>Repeat the four behaviors several times.</p>	
	<p><b>What does it mean to “get away” from a park?</b></p> <p>Answer: Run home and tell someone.</p>	
	<p><b>What does it mean to “get away” from a school?</b></p> <p>Answer: Run home and tell someone.</p>	
	<p><b>What does it mean to “get away” in a house?</b></p> <p>Answer: Run to another room.</p>	

**Application or Skill Practice:** Practice saying, “No.” Identify specific adults who would help students resolve personal safety problems.

Approximately 4 minutes

Instructional Steps	Script & Detailed Directions	Extensions & Suggestions
<p>Practice saying, “No!” loudly and clearly.</p>	<p><i>When someone tries to touch you in a bad or confusing way, always say, “No!” as loud as you can. Sometimes it may feel strange to say, “No!” to an adult. However, you don't need to be polite to someone who is trying to hurt you. You need to say, “No!” and get help from a trusted adult.</i></p> <p><i>Let's practice saying, “No!” right now. <b>Stand up straight and tall. Now let's hear your strong, clear “No!”</b></i></p> <p>Praise students for their efforts.</p>	
<p>Identify adults who would help with personal safety problems.</p>	<p><i>Each of you knows adults who care about you. They would like to help you if you needed help with a problem like the ones we've discussed today.</i></p> <p><b><i>Stand up when you have thought of one or two adults you could tell. It might be your mom or dad or another family member, or a teacher, or a friend's mom or dad, or a neighbor, or our principal.</i></b></p>	

Wait for the students to stand.

*I'm going to call on one of you to share one person you could tell. You don't need to use their name, just tell us how you know them. For example, you might say, "my neighbor" or "my teacher."*

As students share their ideas, have them sit down. You may also ask other students to sit down if they had the same idea. In other words, if a student said, "My mom," you could have all the students who thought they would tell their moms to sit down.

*Remember that if one adult isn't able to help you with a problem, keep telling other adults until someone gives you the help you need.*

**Closure:** Review the rule to avoid bad and confusing touch. Conclude this unit of the health curriculum.

Approximately 2 minutes

Instructional Steps	Script & Detailed Directions	Extensions & Suggestions
Review the main points of the lesson using the poster, "Say, 'NO!'"	<p><i>You've learned a lot today. Like Juliet, you are stronger and you know how to stay safe when someone wants you to keep a bad secret or when something happens that scares you, hurts you, or makes you uncomfortable. Let's review the four things to do. <b>Who can tell me the first thing to do?</b></i></p> <p>Answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Say, "No," in a strong voice.</li><li>2. Get away. Sometimes you have to yell.</li><li>3. Tell someone.</li><li>4. Keep telling until someone believes you.</li></ol> <p><i>Remember that if someone does touch you in a way that bothers you, it is NOT YOUR FAULT!</i></p> <p><i>We've been talking about touches that scare you, hurt you, or make you uncomfortable. There is another kind of touch. Touches that feel good, such as hugs, pats on the back, and holding hands.</i></p> <p><i>We have lots of chances for good touches—just like Juliet when she hugged her Mom or played with her Dad.</i></p>	

<p>Distribute copies of the teacher reference, "Sample Family Letter Following the Personal Safety Lesson," and the family resource sheets, "Child Sexual Abuse: What Every Family Should Know" and "What You Can Do to Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse."</p> 	<p><i>Here is some information for you to take home to your family, including a letter from our principal. Please share with your family what you have learned today.</i></p> <p>It is critical to send home the family letter and resources to inform families of the content of this lesson in case a child wishes to discuss the lesson at home.</p>	
<p>Reinforce the fact that it is best to know what to do in case something happens.</p>	<p><i>Most of the time you won't run into scary situations like the ones we talked about today. But it's good to be prepared so you know what to do in case something does happen.</i></p>	
<p>Review the safety unit.</p>	<p><i>We have learned a lot about safety in this unit. <b>What is one thing you want to be sure to remember?</b></i></p> <p>Answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to stay safe on wheeled recreation equipment</li> <li>• How to prevent burns and fires</li> <li>• What to do in a fire emergency</li> <li>• How to get help from adults</li> <li>• How to get emergency help</li> <li>• What to do about "bad touch"</li> </ul>	





# Teaching Personal Safety

## The Extent of the Problem

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, reported that 45.9 per 1,000 children, or 3,353,000, received an investigation or assessment for possible abuse or neglect in 2003. An estimated 906,000 children, or 31.7% of those investigated, were found to be victims. The national rate of victimization is 12.4 per 1,000 children. These figures include all forms of abuse and neglect. Child sexual abuse represents 10% of the total number of abused children. Clearly, this problem needs to be addressed.

The Department of Health and Human Services also reported that the number of investigations had increased since 1990 while the rate of victimization had decreased. This represents a positive trend in responsiveness to complaints of child abuse and the rate of reported abuse. Research indicates these trends may be due to changes in reporting procedures, the heightened awareness of the problem, and the number of prevention programs available to young people.

To update these statistics, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway at [www.childwelfare.gov/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/).

Despite increases in reporting, prevention programs, and the availability of treatment services for survivors of sexual abuse, many abused children do not reveal their victimization. When they do, families are often reluctant to seek assistance. The statistics may reveal only the tip of the iceberg.

While the reported trends are positive, the numbers of children and adults who pay prices for this form of victimization must continue to be reduced. Educators, families, and communities must remain vigilant in their efforts to address the problem through prevention and treatment.

## Prevention Works

Programs to prevent the sexual exploitation of children are increasingly being incorporated into health and safety curricula across the country. The rationale for prevention programs rests on a number of realities about child sexual abuse.

- The incidence and prevalence of child sexual abuse remains alarmingly high.
- Adults who were victimized as children often report they could have been spared if they had been provided with basic information on how to reject and report the perpetrator's inappropriate behaviors.
- Prevention programs are a contributing factor to the increase in reporting suspected cases and to the decrease of the rate of victimization.
- Research indicates that children are able to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate touches and can use safety rules in an abuse situation, such as saying, "No," getting away, and telling adults.
- Schools, with their consistent and longitudinal contact with children and their families, are the most promising institution for the delivery of preventive efforts.



The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children states that if we can improve the knowledge, self-confidence, and assertiveness skills of children:

- They will be safer because they will be better able to recognize danger and resist potential offenders.
- We will be able to deter many offenders who look for and prey on vulnerable children.
- We can break the “cycle of victimization” in which some of those who have been victimized later become offenders.

The goals for any personal safety program should include:

- To enhance a child’s ability to avoid victimization.
- To enhance a child’s self-esteem.
- To reduce feelings of guilt and blame that often are associated with victimization.
- To promote disclosure of abuse and victimization.
- To enhance and coordinate community response.
- To enhance communication between parents and children about personal safety.
- To reinforce adult supervision and protection.
- To deter offender behavior.

In order for sexual abuse to occur, Finkelhor (1984) suggests that four preconditions must be met.

1. The potential perpetrator must have some motivation to sexually abuse a child.
2. The potential perpetrator must overcome internal inhibitions against acting on such motivations.
3. The potential perpetrator must overcome external inhibitions to sexually abuse a child.
4. The potential perpetrator must overcome the child’s possible resistance to be sexually abused.

Sexual abuse prevention programs address the fourth precondition. One key variable in preventing abuse is the child’s capacity to avoid or resist sexual exploitation. Children who lack knowledge about inappropriate contact and who are deficient in personal safety skills would likely be at high risk for sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse prevention programs are designed to teach children three basic safety skills:

1. How to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate touch
2. How to assertively say, “No,” and get away
3. To tell parents or other trusted individuals if they have been abused

### **Main Concepts to Be Taught**

The following concepts are the heart of this personal safety lesson and are reinforced at each grade level that covers this topic.

1. Everyone needs to be touched. We all need warmth and affection.
2. Sexual abuse prevention is not something children need to worry about 24 hours a day. It is another area of safety, like bicycle or water safety.
3. Some touches are not positive. These touches can scare, confuse, or hurt a child. If anyone is touching a child in a way she or he doesn’t like or understand, the child should talk to a trusted adult.
4. Children have a right to their own bodies and their own feelings. Children also have a right not to be inappropriately touched on the private parts of their bodies.



5. Children need to trust their senses. If their feelings tell them something or someone is not okay, they need to talk to a trusted adult about what they are feeling.
6. Children have a right to **say, “No,” get away, and tell someone** they trust if anyone is touching them in ways they don’t understand or ways that make them feel uncomfortable.
7. Children should keep telling until someone believes them and takes some action. It is never too late to tell.
8. Children are not to blame if someone touches them inappropriately. The person who touched them is responsible.
9. Children need to know who to tell. It is helpful to have students identify several people to whom they could turn for help. Generally, these people include family members, school personnel, and other trusted individuals.
10. Sexual abuse happens to many boys and girls. There is help for families where sexual abuse is occurring.
11. This is teaching personal body safety, not sex education.

### Suggestions for Teaching

The following guidelines will help you present the material of the personal safety lesson in the most helpful way for your students.

#### 1. **Set a comfortable tone for discussion.**

- Present the topic and lesson in a calm, reassuring manner. While child sexual abuse tends to be an emotional topic for most people, remind yourself that you are teaching young people how to keep their bodies safe just as you do when you teach them how to ride a bicycle safely.
- Expect some students to be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Acknowledge that many people, children and adults, are uncomfortable talking about their bodies. Reassure them that their feelings are normal and that the topic is important to discuss.
- Reinforce respectful interaction during the discussion and enforce classroom rules related to listening and avoiding teasing or ridicule.
- Conduct the lesson in a comfortable setting. You may want to have younger children sit in a circle, on a rug, or in whatever structure you feel is comfortable and will encourage discussion.

#### 2. **Clearly introduce the topic.**

- The script in the lesson will help you.

#### 3. **Define all terms.**

- Do not assume students understand all of the words, such as “private parts” means the body parts covered by a swim suit.

#### 4. **Answer all questions clearly and simply.**

- Take the time you need to think through an appropriate response to a question. Tell the class, “That’s a good question. Let me think about it for a while and we can talk about it later.”
- Be sure you return to the question and provide an answer.



**5. During presentation and discussion, follow these guidelines:**

- Balance discussions of “not okay” or hurtful touch with discussions of positive, nurturing touch.
- Keep students focused on the personal body safety objective.
- Be sure to give information in a way that fits the developmental level of your students.
- Repeat material in different ways so all concepts are understood.

**6. Be aware of students’ behaviors.**

- You may observe signals of problems or possible abuse. Pay particular attention to students who act out, avoid eye contact after the discussion, sink down in their chairs, or become ill midway through the discussion. Also note those who ask specific questions or give specific answers that indicate more knowledge than typical for their age.
- You may want to talk with these students privately or consult with the principal about them. While these behaviors don’t necessarily signal abuse, they should be taken seriously and followed up.

**7. Be aware of your feelings.**

- Your feelings will affect the way you present the material. Feelings of anger, guilt, denial, and confusion are normal reactions to this topic, especially when a child discloses abuse to you.
- Reactions of those closest to the child set the tone for how quickly the child recovers. Children can experience trauma from both the sexual abuse and the subsequent investigation.
- You may need to talk to someone about what a child has shared, but be aware of the child’s right to confidentiality.

Portions of this teacher reference were adapted from  
*Personal Safety Curriculum for Prevention of Child Abuse*,  
Marlyn Olson, Ed.D., Tacoma School District, Tacoma, Washington

**Resources**

Crimes against Children Research Center: [www.unh.edu/ccrc/](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/).

Finkelhor, D. *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research*. New York: Free Press, 1984.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com).

Child Welfare Information Gateway: [www.childwelfare.gov/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families:  
[www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov).



## What to Do If a Student Discloses Abuse

### Handling Disclosures During or After a Lesson

Teachers are frequently concerned that a student may disclose abuse during a classroom presentation. Most abused children will talk to you about it privately, not in front of others. Rather than fear disclosures, view them as a positive step in the direction of getting help for abused children. You are not responsible for the investigation, intervention, or therapy, but you are required by law to report any disclosures about abuse.

If a disclosure does occur during a lesson or privately, the following tips will help you handle the situation.

#### 1. **Remain calm.**

- Remember that your reaction will have an impact on how the student feels about what he or she has disclosed.

#### 2. **Acknowledge the comment and resume the lesson.**

- If the disclosure occurs during a lesson, resume the lesson after acknowledging the comment.
- Be sure to tell the student, "It's good that you told me. I'd like to talk with you more about that privately." Set a time that is realistic, and be sure to follow up.
- Keep the lesson moving along, still allowing for questions and answers but redirecting story-telling.

#### 3. **Talk with the student.**

- Find a place to talk privately.

This helps remove distractions and gives the child a feeling of safety and confidentiality.

- Show respect and understanding.

Invite the student to speak. You can begin the conversation like this:

- "Now we can talk privately. Tell me more about. . . ."
- "I'm not sure what you meant by [use child's words or phrase]. I want to listen if you would like to talk about it."

While the student talks, maintain eye contact and an open, understanding facial expression. Do not show shock, disapproval, or disbelief.

- Ask open-ended questions.

Ask open-ended questions as needed to help the child share his or her ideas, feelings and concerns. For example, ask, "What did you want to tell me about today's lesson?" rather than "Did someone in your family do something bad to you?"

Get just enough information from the child to determine whether you need to make a report.

Remember what the child says so you can include that information if a report is necessary.



- Reassure the student.

The student needs your support while telling you about the abuse and afterward.

- Tell the student you believe him or her. Experience in treatment and reporting indicates that children seldom make up such stories.
- Emphasize that this problem is not the student's fault and that he or she is not to blame for what happened or will happen as a result of the abuse.
- Reassure the student that you will assist him or her with this problem and get help.

#### 4. Report as required.

Once you feel you have enough information to file a report, tell the student, "We need to get more help." If the student expresses concern that someone he or she cares about might get into trouble because of the report, explain that the person needs help to stop hurting children. Explain that it is important to keep children safe, and reporting problems like the one the student described is one way to do that. Immediately follow the school's procedure for reporting abuse. It is your responsibility to make sure the report is made.

#### Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Michigan

School teachers, counselors, and administrators are among the professionals required to report actual or suspected child abuse and neglect, as specified in Michigan's Child Protection Law. **If a child tells you of abuse or neglect, or if you have good reason to suspect such a problem, you must report the disclosure or suspicion immediately** to Children's Protective Services (CPS) by phone and then follow up with a written report within 72 hours.

Remember that your role as a mandated reporter is just to report your concerns, not to investigate them. The reporting form requires you to describe why you suspect abuse or neglect, for example, because of suspicious physical or behavioral indicators or because the child told you about abuse. You have no responsibility for proving what may have happened or who may have harmed the child. If you have suspicions but aren't sure whether they're solid enough to warrant reporting, you can call a CPS office for consultation or talk with a school administrator or counselor.

If you have any questions about your school's procedure for reporting abuse, ask the appropriate people for clarification. They can also help you complete the oral and written reports.

You may find it helpful to read the "Mandated Reporter's Resource Guide," which the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) published in May 2005 to help professionals understand their reporting responsibilities. Your school might have copies of the guide, or you can download its PDF file from the DHS website at [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs). Enter the guide title in the Search box to find the correct link for the file download.

You may also participate in an online Mandated Reporter Training course at [www.carehouse.org](http://www.carehouse.org). This course is sponsored by the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County.

If you would like to read the Child Protection Law (Public Act 238 of 1975), contact a local office of the Michigan Department of Human Services, or visit [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) to search for the law's text online or request a copy. Below are excerpts of some of the parts pertinent to educational professionals.



## Excerpts of Michigan Child Protection Law: Public Act 238 of 1975

### **Definitions [Section 722.622]**

“Child” means a person under 18 years of age.

“Child Abuse” means harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child’s health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher’s aide, or a member of the clergy.

“Child Neglect” means harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any person responsible for the child’s health or welfare which occurs through either of the following:

- (i) Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- (ii) Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child’s health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child’s health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of this risk.

“Department” means the family independent agency (recently changed to the department of human services).

“Sexual Abuse” means engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration as those terms are defined in section 520a of the Michigan penal code, 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.520a, with a child.

“Sexual Exploitation” includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, or allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging in photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a listed sexual act as defined in section 145c of the Michigan penal code, 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.145c.

### **Reporting [Section 722.623]**

(1) An individual is required to report under this act as follows:

(a) A physician, coroner, medical examiner, nurse, a person licensed to provide emergency medical care, audiologist, psychologist, family therapist, certified social worker, social worker, social work technician, school administrator, school counselor or teacher, law enforcement officer, or regulated child care provider, who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make immediately, by telephone or otherwise, an oral report, or cause an oral report to be made, of the suspected child abuse or neglect to the department. Within 72 hours after making the oral report, the reporting person shall file a written report as required in this act. If the reporting person is a member of the staff of a hospital, agency, or school, the reporting person shall notify the person in charge of the hospital, agency, or school of his or her finding and that the report has been made, and shall make a copy of the written report available to the person in charge. A notification to the person in charge of a hospital, agency, or school does not relieve the member of the staff of the hospital, agency, or school of the obligation of reporting to the department as required by this section. One report from a hospital, agency, or school shall be considered adequate to meet the reporting requirement. A member of the staff of a hospital,



agency, or school shall not be dismissed or otherwise penalized for making a report required by this act or for cooperating in an investigation

- (8) For purpose of this act, the pregnancy of a child less than 12 years of age or the presence of a venereal disease in a child who is over one month of age but less than 12 years of age, shall be reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect have occurred.

In addition to those persons required to report child abuse or neglect under section three (3), any person, including a child, who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect may report the matter to the department of law enforcement agency.

***Protection for the Reporting Person [Section 722.625]***

Except for records available under section 7(2)(a), (b), and (n), the identity of a reporting person shall be confidential subject to disclosure only with the consent of that person or by judicial process. A person acting in good faith who makes a report, cooperates in an investigation, or assists in any other requirement of this act shall be immune from civil or criminal liability which might otherwise be incurred thereby. A person making a report or assisting in any other requirement of this act shall be presumed to have acted in good faith. This immunity from civil or criminal liability extends only to acts done pursuant to this act and does not extend to negligent act which causes personal injury or death or to the malpractice of a physician which results in a personal injury or death.

**[Section 722.623]**

A member of the staff of a hospital, agency, or school shall not be dismissed or otherwise penalized for making a report required by this act or for cooperating in an investigation.

***Failure to Report [Section 722.633]***

- (1) A person, required to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect, who is required to report under this act and who fails to do so, is civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by the failure.
- (2) A person, required to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect, who is required to report under this act and who knowingly fails to do so, is guilty of misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine of not more than \$500.00, or both.

***False Reporting [Section 722.633]***

- (5) A person who intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or neglect under this act knowing that the report is false is guilty of a crime as follows:
- (a) If the child abuse or neglect reported would not constitute a crime or would constitute a misdemeanor if the report were true, the person is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine of not more than \$100.00, or both.
- (b) If the child abuse or neglect reported would constitute a felony if the report were true, the person is guilty of a felony punishable by the lesser of the following:
- (i) The penalty for the child abuse or neglect falsely reported.
- (ii) Imprisonment for not more than 4 years or a fine of not more than \$2,000.00, or both.



## Sample Family Letter Following the Personal Safety Lesson

[ON SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Dear Parent:

Today your child learned about personal safety. This lesson is part of our school's health program called the *Michigan Model for Health*<sup>®</sup>.

Sadly, sexual abuse of children takes place more often than we would like to believe. School programs help children learn to stay safe from abuse. The lesson in the *Michigan Model*<sup>®</sup> present material on the children's level. The skills needed to prevent abuse are taught in a safe and simple way. Through this lesson, students will learn:

- How to judge between safe and unsafe touch
- How to protect themselves
- Who to go to for help

We hope you will take a minute to read the materials sent home today. Please discuss personal safety with your child.

Sincerely,

[Principal's Name]

# Child Sexual Abuse: What Every Family Should Know



## Basic Information Helps Prevent Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any act of a sexual nature done to or with a child. Most of these harmful acts are committed by someone the child knows. This could be a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a babysitter. Very few children are molested by strangers.



Sexual touches often confuse young children. They may have trouble telling the difference between sexual abuse and healthy touch. Abusers may confuse children more by saying what they're doing is okay but secret. Today, your child learned to tell the difference between good touch and bad touch, as shown in this list.

Good Touch	Bad Touch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hugs that feel warm and safe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hugs that are too tight</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gentle tickling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tickling that won't stop</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kisses from caring adults at bedtime and for hellos and good-byes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kisses from someone a child doesn't like or doesn't feel comfortable with</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playful and soft touches from pets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slaps, kicks, punches, pinches, and other hurts</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handshakes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard squeezing or grabbing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pats on the head, arm, shoulder, or back when someone does a good job or wants comfort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touches on the private parts of a child or someone else in a child's presence</li> </ul>

**In class, we defined "private parts" as the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit. Students learned they have the right to decide if someone can touch them. No one should touch a child's private parts, except as needed for health care in the presence of a parent or trusted adult.**

**Children who are taught to protect themselves are less likely to be abused. In class, students learned these safety rules.**

- Avoid being alone with someone you don't trust. If you feel bad or sick around someone, trust your instincts. Get away. Make an excuse if needed.
- If you can't get away from someone touching you in a bad way, loudly say, "No! I don't like that!" Tell him or her you don't want to be touched. Keep saying, "No!" and trying to get away.
- If someone touches you in a way that feels bad, tell a trusted adult right away. Keep telling until you find an adult who can help you.
- If someone tries to grab you or get you into a car, yell, "No! I don't trust you! Let me go!" Kick or punch as hard as you can. Run toward where other people will be, such as a house, a store, an office building, or the side of a road.

## Child Abuse Causes Many Problems

Sexual abuse causes both physical and emotional problems. Children often feel guilty and responsible for the abuse. They often think the abuse happened because they are “bad” or “dirty,” partly because abusers may say this. *Sexual abuse is never the fault of the child being abused.*

Abused children show a wide range of symptoms. The signs of abuse vary with age. However, most abused children complain of various physical problems and show mistrust of adults. Other signs may include depression, suicidal actions, withdrawal, or self-destructive or delinquent acts. Any sudden, unexplained change in behavior may be a sign of sexual abuse.

Even when children have learned that sexual abuse is not their fault and should not be kept secret, they may hesitate to get help. A child may fear the results of reporting abuse, especially if the abuser is a family member. Children need to know that abusers have a serious problem and need to get help to prevent harming children. Children’s safety is more important.



For more information, visit the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s website: [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)



## Children Need Adults to Help Resolve These Problems

Sexual abuse affects everyone, even if our own children are not assaulted. All of us can help deal with this social problem.

- Provide understanding and care to those who have been hurt.
- Know that offenders do not change without outside help.
- Organize neighborhood programs to help protect children.
- Ask schools to provide information about sexual assault.
- Form community groups to support education, treatment, and law enforcement programs.

If a child tells you about sexual abuse, take it seriously. Find help for him or her.

# What You Can Do to Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse



To help prevent child sexual abuse, we can prepare children for what they might face if someone tries to abuse them. We can protect them from dangerous situations. And if a child says he or she has been abused, there are ways we can help.

## Preparing Children for the Possibility of Abuse

- Children need lots of loving words and physical affection. Help your child feel secure in your love so he or she will be less likely to accept the unhealthy attention of an abuser.
- Remind your child that most people protect children and would never hurt them. However, some people seem nice but may do mean things. Encourage your child not to keep any secrets about someone like this.
- Help your child understand he or she should disobey anyone, even an adult, who tells him or her to do something wrong. Staying safe is more important than concerns about rudeness or authority.
- Teach your child how to say “no” in words and body language. Help him or her learn to get away and tell you if anyone tries to touch him or her in a bad way.
- Make it easy for your child to talk with you. Spend time listening and observing. Take what your child says seriously.
- Give your child specific definitions and examples of sexual abuse.
- Prepare your child to deal with bribes, threats, and physical force. Play “What if?” or “Let’s pretend” games to help your child learn how to react to different situations.

## Protecting Children From Dangerous Situations

- Be aware of who spends time with your child. Unwanted touch may come from someone you like and trust. Get to know the adults and older children who are close to your child.
- Take care when choosing babysitters and day care providers.
- Refuse to leave your child in the company of anyone you do not trust. Pay attention to what your child says and does around people, especially if he or she talks about feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Make sure your child can identify signs of trouble and get away before something happens.
- Set up a “password” for you and your child to use as a secret clue. If it is safe for your child to go with someone, tell that person the password. Tell your child to ask for the password before he or she agrees to ride with someone. Instruct your child not to go with any stranger or friend who doesn’t know the password.
- Know where your child is at all times. If you allow him or her to go some places in public without you, ask him or her to stay with a buddy.
- Teach your child to never play in deserted areas.
- Talk with your child about safe Internet behaviors. Children should never give out information about themselves in chat rooms or e-mail. Tell your child to let you know right away if someone he or she “met” online asks to see him or her in person.

## Helping Children Who Have Been Harmed

- Children seldom lie about sexual abuse. They find it very hard to tell someone. If a child tells you about abuse, you need to listen carefully and believe what he or she says. Talk about it in a safe, private place.
- Reassure the child that the abuse isn't his or her fault and that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Don't blame the child for what happened.
- Don't over-react or minimize the incident. The effects of sexual abuse are different for each child.
- Understand that it may take time to figure out the problem.
- Know local resources, and choose help carefully.
- Let the child talk about the assault whenever he or she needs to express feelings.
- If you learn that your child has been abused, be willing to talk with experts or counselors as a family.
- Report any abuse to the authorities immediately.

### Children's Protective Services Can Help!

Call Protective Services if you have questions or concerns about child abuse. You can find the phone number of your Children's Protective Services agency in the government section of your phone book. For example in Michigan, look under Michigan State of, Department of Human Services.

FAMILY  
RESOURCE  
SHEET



Say,  
**"NO."**



Get  
Away.



Yell.



Tell  
Someone.