

OUTLINE OF EVIDENCE

Peter Jaffe, Ph.D

Preamble: The purpose of this evidence is to examine ways in which sexual abuse can be prevented in communities. The framework is a public health model based on primary prevention (universal programs), secondary prevention (programs for at risk children & adolescents) and tertiary prevention (treatment of victims and offenders, preventing re-victimization after disclosure). The public health model is important because it is understandable that you can't prevent a problem by only treating the consequences. In the case of sexual abuse the consequences are far-reaching (inter-generational) and are often described as a "silent, violent epidemic" that is a leading cause of death in adults. (Felitti et al 1998)

1. OVERVIEW: PREVENTION FRAMEWORKS

- Prevention of child sexual abuse must include a multi-targeted and ongoing endeavour that is integrated into all community systems and institutions. A variety of approaches, from community-based work aimed at supporting families, to promoting healthy sexuality with children, to training teachers, social workers, police officers, and the medical profession to recognize signs of sexual abuse, are necessary for prevention to be effective.
 - An example of a primary prevention approach is the public awareness media campaigns that give the information to a broad audience (such as the ad campaigns developed by STOP IT NOW). Secondary prevention looks to target high-risk populations, and tertiary prevention efforts are directed towards preventing re-abuse and re-victimization once it has happened and has been disclosed.
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2. PRIMARY PREVENTION

i) Public Awareness

- Canada has yet to develop a national public awareness strategy to deal with the issue of child sexual abuse. Although we have led the way with research, beginning with the Badgley report in the early 1980's, Rix

Rogers report entitled Reaching for Solutions, (1990) and including internationally renowned offender risk research, we have yet to establish a national public health strategy to address the problem of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

- The United States have benefited from national non-profit organizations, such as Stop It Now, which spearheaded the efforts to get the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta to declare child sexual abuse an epidemic in the United States; or from the Darkness to Light Organization (Darkness to Light: An Example of a Prevention Organization's Activities and Collaborations) which offers a comprehensive website with a range of prevention materials and information.
- With a public health approach layers of prevention initiatives can be developed. For example, Stop It Now's public policy, public education, and research programs have been directed to adults who are concerned about inappropriate sexualized behaviour in another adult, adolescent, or child, and to adults who are concerned about their own thoughts or behaviours.
- **The key premise of their work is that adults--not children--must shoulder the burden of stopping the cycle of abuse.** While children must be warned and trained about child sexual abuse, expecting them to bear the primary burden of prevention is unrealistic. Because most children are dependent on their abusers, many have great difficulty reporting abuse. The four key elements of their public awareness campaign are to:
 - Develop awareness in potential abusers and encourage them to seek help
 - Challenge abusers to stop the abuse immediately and seek treatment through a helpline or on the internet.
 - Work with families, peers, and friends on how to confront abusers.
 - Join with others to build a social climate that says: "we will no longer tolerate the sexual abuse of children."
www.STOPITNOW.com
- This organization has used media ad campaigns with the above messages and they offer access to a helpline for those wanting to report someone or themselves.

ii) Public Awareness: Child Pornography

- Specific information regarding child pornography must be made available to the public through a variety of media efforts. The startling increase in the production and dissemination of child pornography made possible by technology and the Internet has become a real risk for many children.
- Too often child pornography is linked to ideology about pornography in general (that it is a harmless and passive). Child pornography needs to be separated out and renamed for what it is, 'images of child sexual abuse'. Abuse awareness messages should be targeted to adults and focus on detection (what to look for and where to look for it) and reporting.
- An awareness campaign should also encourage an organized advocacy effort to lobby corporate support for eradicating the marketing of child sexual abuse through the pornography websites. Credit card companies and Internet servers should be lobbied to take proactive steps to close down websites that sell child sexual abuse images.

iii) Primary Prevention: Programs For Children Prevention & Adolescents

- Prevention efforts that are targeted to children (victimization prevention education) can be effective in educating children about sexual abuse dynamics however the research that proves they are effective at preventing sexual abuse is complicated and lacking. While programs can be evaluated from the perspective of how well they were received and how well children learned, whether or not that learning translates into anything more is the question. Results of a meta-analysis indicated that victimization prevention programs are successful in teaching children sexual abuse concepts and self-protection skills, but the authors emphasized that transfer of these skills to real-life situations has not yet been shown (H. McMillan, *Preventative Health Care, 2000 Update: Prevention of Child Maltreatment*, excerpts).
- Keith Kaufman's research in late 1990's (Kaufman 2005 – Promoting the Prevention of Sexual Violence) suggested that street proofing or child abuse prevention programs directed to children could be ineffective in preventing the sexual assault from occurring. More recently he has outlined a "situational prevention model of child sexual abuse" based on the reality of where, when, who and how abuse occurs.
- Prevention messages directed to children should make them aware of the dynamics in sexually abusive relationships, including the likelihood that the child will know and trust the offender.

- The focus of the prevention message should be on helping children identify how they would make a disclosure if they were being abused.
 - The key is to not have an expectation that the child can soldier themselves against an adult who may be in an authority role with them or who may be responsible for their care and support. This adds to the feelings of guilt the child experiences as a result of being involved in the sexual behaviour. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that the child may not be able to stop the abuse at the time it is happening but that they can stop it by telling an adult who will act on the information.
 - Programs for children and adolescents that address the issue of sexualized behaviour problems and unwanted sexual advances are important. Adolescent sex offending is a problem that is often missed in discussion of sexual abuse. (Finkelhor, 1995 – Victimization Prevention Programs)
 - Encouraging healthy sexual boundaries and disclosing unwanted sexual touching by peers or adolescents is important to teach children because individuals who develop a sexual interest in children usually develop it during their teenage years and even younger.
 - Teaching children how to respond to older children trying to engage them in sexual activity with adults could be very important. (Project “Guardian”: The sexual exploitation of male youth in London, 1997).
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3. SECONDARY PREVENTION

i) Professional Awareness (teachers, family doctors etc.)

- Professional awareness is critical to the detection of sexual abuse with children. Certainly professionals such as teachers, play a key role in creating disclosure friendly environments. Training that addresses the dynamics of sexually abusive relationships; the process of disclosure, the duty to report and the various system responses to the disclosure are all helpful in preventing sexual abuse from happening or continuing.
- Ideally, training of community professionals should include the following elements
 - Understand the facts of child sexual abuse - incidence rates and effects on individuals and society
 - Understand how child sexual abuse happens
 - Understand that adults are responsible for the protection of children

- Understand the importance of screening staff/volunteers who work with children and adolescents
 - Understand the importance of a well conceived one-adult/one-child policy
 - Have resources to react responsibly to incidents of child sexual abuse
 - Understand the proactive role youth-serving organizations need to take to protect children and educate their communities about child sexual abuse
 - Understand the role of the CAS and police in allegations of sexual abuse
 - Understand the criminal justice system and the treatment network for victims and families
 - Understand their role in creating a disclosure friendly environment
 - Understand their duty to report
 - Understand the issues with respect to children with sexualized behaviour problems, or adolescent offending, the focus being on information to professionals and to families about the early warning signs of a problem, as well as the availability of early diagnosis and effective treatment from a sex-specific specialist.
- Specialized joint training for police and CAS on forensic interviewing skill is essential. Currently the Police College and Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies ("OACAS") training division have suspended their course on investigating sexual offenses against children. It is left to individual communities to organize joint training opportunities. This should be readdressed. The forensic interviewing authorized child protection social worker course (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Society curriculum) is available to CAS's.

ii) Professional Awareness regarding Child Pornography

- Specific emphasis should be directed toward educating professional groups about the issue of child pornography.
- Police resources specialized in this area need to be expanded and include a mandate to train other community professionals on the nature of the problem, the impact of the Internet and the newer technologies that allow for easy production of child pornography
- Professional groups and organizations should be encouraged to establish policy statements that reflect a zero tolerance for child pornography
- Specific emphasis should be directed toward educating professional groups about the issue of child pornography.

- Training on the scope and characteristics of the child pornography industry needs to be made available to professionals

iii) Professional Duty to Report Training and Specialized Sexual Abuse Training

- Much of the professional awareness efforts rest with the CAS duty to report training. Following the 2000 *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) amendments, professional training was offered twice monthly by the CAS with respect to the duty to report. Currently that training is offered on a request basis.
 - The London Children's Aid Society, for example, has a treatment program designed for families where sexual abuse has been verified.
 - The London Children's Aid Society has partnered with the local Board of Education to deliver a curriculum for grade two teachers on the procedures to follow in the event there was a disclosure of sexual abuse.
 - As well, the CAS and school board have a protocol for dealing with child protection issues, including investigations of board personnel. (Thames Valley District School Board Policy June 27, 2000)
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4. TERTIARY PREVENTION

i) Community Agency Collaboration

- Community collaboration is critical for the investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse and for the treatment of victims of child sexual abuse
- Protocols for sharing information are essential, especially between the police, Children's Aid Society and Crown, (police/CAS investigative protocols are now mandated)
- A multidisciplinary team approach has been adapted in many of the states in the U.S.
- Typically the team includes child protection, police, prosecution, child interview specialists and child witness advocates who work together to ensure that the child abuse investigation is child centered and reduces the system induced trauma that can result from having multiple interviews

- Investigators specifically trained in interviewing children conduct the forensic interview. In the case of historical child sexual abuse, some similar training for interviewing adult survivors.
- Protocols for investigating allegations of child sexual abuse must be established with the organizations that act in a parental capacity such as school boards, residential placement providers, daycares etc.
- Training with respect to investigation and treatment needs to be interdisciplinary to ensure the collaboration necessary amongst the justice, health, mental health, social service, and education sectors.
- Ensuring that treatment services for both child and adult victims are available. Additionally, it is important to have services available for non-offending parents, non-abused siblings, and adult and adolescent offenders in order to prevent further victimization.

ii) Responding To Multi-victim Multi-offender (MVMO) Cases of Child Sexual Abuse

- Community agency collaboration is important to all sexual abuse investigations but it is absolutely critical to cases of MVMO. These cases are defined as involving more than one offender and more than one victim within a certain identified community by members of that community or within defined geographical area where there are connections between the victims or perpetrators.
- MVMO cases can be very challenging to investigate and prosecute because of their magnitude and complexity
- Special resources must be made available to police, CAS, crown and mental health services in order to address the system burden these cases create
- A Major Case Management framework and accompanying tools must be available within the mandated police service
- A coordinated response by the mandated CAS, police and Crown's office is essential
- Specialized training for investigators is important and should include guidelines for interviewing the children that reduce the possibility of leading questions.
- Ongoing communication and sharing of information is essential between investigative partners and community service partners

- A community advisor group consisting of representatives from key stakeholder groups (child protection, police, criminal justice, children's mental health, adult survivor services, health, education etc) should be considered depending on the magnitude of the case.
- A coordinated media strategy is important
- Two communities that dealt with multi-victim/multi-offender cases in the early to mid-nineties were Prescott, Leeds/Grenville (Jerico) and London, Ontario (Project Guardian). Both communities have resources available that can be of assistance to other communities if confronted with such a challenge. (*Jerico – From Crisis to Coordination: An integrated community response to a multi-victim child sexual abuse crisis*, 1995, Table of Contents, Overview of Project Guardian at: www.lfcc.on.ca)

iii) Responding To Child Sexual Abuse Cases Perpetrated Within An Institution (Training, Awareness, Screening, Responding to Allegations)

- A good example of a comprehensive review of child sexual abuse within an institution is Justice Robin's review of teacher misconduct in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. (*Protecting our students: A review to identify & prevent sexual misconduct in Ontario Schools.* Executive Summary 2000)
- Education and training efforts need to be directed at the institutions themselves (e.g., staff, volunteers, board members), as well as community professionals who provide services to survivors. (For example, the Ontario hockey association has developed materials for coaches and parents that address the issue of child sexual abuse).
- Communities need to ensure an ongoing commitment to training and awareness on this topic, rather than superficial or isolated efforts. A starting point for education would be to have institutional leaders clearly name the problem within their settings, and verbalize a commitment to redress past abuse.
- Education and training also needs to be directed to front-line professionals and include expanded investigative and intervention strategies that more fully capture the unique nature of the abuse and the long-term consequences.
- In the context of criminal hearings, a judge and/or jury may need to understand delayed disclosures and continuing contact with the abuser in some instances.

- At the sentencing stage, a mental health assessment may help the court understand the long-term impact of the abuse on all areas of functioning, such as mental health, employment, relationships, education, health, and family functioning.
- Steps to prevent future occurrences of abuse by persons affiliated with community organizations must be taken. Some examples are improved screening and supervision of staff, putting policies in place to deal with transgressions, and community awareness programs (Law Commission of Canada, *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Sexual Abuse in Canadian Institutions*, Executive Summary, 2000, available at www.lcc.gc.ca). Efforts to develop safeguards within community settings must recognize the vulnerability and power imbalance inherent in this issue. Safeguards may include better training and awareness programs for adults as well as youth.
- Policy and protocol must be developed for dealing with disclosures and collaborating with police and child protection services, criminal justice professionals, health and treatment providers that promote safety, accountability, and healing from abuse.
- The evolving field of child sexual abuse in institutions and organizations has considerable implications for mental health services and forensic assessments, such as criminal and civil court hearings. Survivors of abuse, whether adults or children, often need more specific and prolonged treatment than what is typically available, and some must first overcome their distrust of professionals.
- Legal proceedings may trigger flashbacks and other trauma-related symptoms that further undermine current adjustment and family functioning. Some of the mental health problems suffered across the lifespan may be disguised by attempts to avoid reminders of the abuse, such as fear or disrespect for authority, substance abuse, loss of faith, etc., which require careful assessment and differential diagnosis.

iv) Police and Child Protection Protocols for Coordination of Investigation/Safety Planning/Healing

- Protocols between police and CAS are vital. The effectiveness of the protocol is dependent on the working relationships within the organizations and often the quality of the process when developing the protocol establishes those working relationships. Each community should engage in a regular process of reviewing protocols. Ongoing liaison roles in each organization are critical for processing complaints and ensuring the

protocol is disseminated within each organization. (see sample protocol between London Police Service and CAS)

- Protocol should include roles and responsibilities and the provision of joint forensic interviews. Training in forensic interviewing skills is enhanced when it is provided jointly as well.

v) Police and Child Protection Protocols for the Coordination of Investigations Involving Child Pornography

- Protocols for reporting and investigating cases involving child pornography need to be established
- Police services are overwhelmed with the magnitude of the problem and the limitation of their resources
- Efforts such as the one initiated by the Sex Crime Unit of the Metro Toronto Police service should be highlighted. The Toronto Sex Crime Unit in partnership with Microsoft Inc. developed a training video, offered a four day international conference and developed investigative software to track offenders.
- Joint training initiatives for police, child protection and Crown specifically addressing this area of child sexual abuse needs to be developed
- Policing services need to be provided with funds that allow for the most up to date training on investigative techniques
- Child protection professionals need to understand the problem and develop risk management strategies that take into consideration the protection of children in the care of an individual with child pornography.
- The research linking viewing with offending is in its infancy and in light of the availability of child pornography on the Internet more efforts to understand the links need to be initiated to help inform police and child protection professionals

iv) Child Witness Project with the Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System (see www.lfcc.on.ca)

- In London, the Child Witness Project helps children and adolescents who must testify in criminal court, usually in cases of physical or sexual abuse or the witnessing of assaults against their mothers (L. Sas, A. Cunningham (London Family Court Clinic) *Tipping the Balance* (1995)), The overarching goals of the program are to facilitate the conditions necessary for a victim/witness to provide a full and candid account of the

evidence without compromising a defendant's right to a fair trial and to ensure that young and vulnerable witnesses are not traumatized by the legal process.

v) Early intervention and treatment for victims (and perpetrators)

- The crisis of the disclosure is the opportune time for developing treatment alliances with the victim and the victim's family. This is true whether the disclosure is current or historical. The system response to sexual abuse can be overwhelming and ensuring that the treatment services are introduced early will assist with the crisis of the disclosure and increase the likelihood that the family will remain in treatment.
- Services must be timely, accessible and adaptive to the individual family circumstances. In cases of intrafamilial sexual abuse, where the perpetrator is in a parental role, the ongoing protection of the children in the family is often dependent on those services being timely, comprehensive, coordinated for all family members and accessible.
- Services should be available for the child victim, non-offending parent, and offender. Offering a timely and comprehensive treatment response to intrafamilial sexual abuse cases can offset the tendency for denial to set in (by all family members) post the crisis of the disclosure. This is also true for extra-familial or acquaintance molestation/abuse in order to support the victim.
- While society is not sympathetic to those who perpetrate sexual crimes against children and therefore less concerned about their treatment outside of incarceration, sexual offending treatment is an important component of prevention.