Preventing Child Maltreatment in Youth Serving Organizations

A Bibliography of the Research

October 2016

Scope

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts to publications on prevention of child maltreatment in youth serving organizations. Publications covering issues of abuse within religiously affiliated organizations are not included. International publications are not included.

This list of publications was compiled through a multi-step process that included searches of numerous bibliographic databases and reputable organizational websites, followed by division of publications as religiously affiliated, international, non-religiously affiliated, education affiliated, and other. A preliminary list was compiled including U.S.-only based publications covering non-religious affiliated organizations. This list was then divided into 1) empirical literature on prevention strategies and 2) general publications related to description and prevalence of the problem. This bibliography lists the four remaining prevention research publications.

A plethora of literature and resources without empirical research for support exists. Most of these publications offer recommendations based upon experience, yet without empirical evidence of their efficacy. The relatively few research publications listed here support four tenets of prevention: training, screening, monitoring and supervision, and response.

Organization

Publications are listed in date-descending order. Author abstracts are provided unless otherwise stated.

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A Bibliography to the Research

Abel, G. G., Wiegel, M., Jordan, A., Harlow, N., Hsu, Y. S., & Martinez, M. (2012). Development and validation of classification models to identify hidden child molesters applying to child service organizations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(7), 1378-1389.

Organizations caring for children sometimes unknowingly accept hidden child molesters as staff or volunteers because they have no reliable way to identify these individuals. The goal of the present study was to develop and validate a screening methodology to identify individuals who have a higher likelihood of having sexually touched minors (17 years of age or younger) in the past. Long term studies of untreated adults who have sexually abused children in the past have found them to have a high rate of continuing to abuse children, ranging from 17% to 37%. Currently, the most common method of screening for child sexual abusers is to use criminal background checks. However, studies have shown that criminal background checks identify less than 1% of candidates as having sexual offense histories against either adults or children. This new classification methodology was designed to improve on this by accurately identifying a larger percentage of applicants who may present a risk to the children served by these organizations. In developing these models, one major challenge was creating models with a high specificity to correctly identify over 90% of adults in the population who do not molest, while retaining high sensitivity to identify child sexual abusers who conceal to gain access to children. To develop and validate a child sexual abuse prevention screen to identify child sexual abusers hidden among applicants seeking jobs or volunteer positions working with children, the present study used classification models derived from linear regression analyses to discriminate between samples of concealing child sexual abusers and general population volunteers who had never been accused of sexual misconduct. Researchers developed separate models for men and women. For the male classification model, the specificity was 90.3% and the bootstrapped sensitivity was 51.0%. For the female classification model, the specificity was 90.0% and the sensitivity was 37.1%. Thus, this classification model was able to correctly identify approximately 50% of men and 40% of

women who have sexually abused a child in the past. Compared to the less than 1% identified by criminal background checks, this classification methodology has the potential of substantially increasing a child service organization's ability to identify individuals who have the highest probability of having sexually abused children in the past and are concealing from the organization they are attempting to join. © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Wurtele, S. K. (2012). Preventing the sexual exploitation of minors in youth-serving organizations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34,* 2442-2453.

This article discusses child sexual abuse (CSA) by staff members in youth-serving organizations (YSOs) including schools, residential treatment and correction facilities, scouting, clubs, faith centers, and sports leagues. Over the last ten years there have been highly publicized reports of adults in positions of authority, such as teachers, coaches, and ministers, sexually exploiting youth under their care. Using an ecological perspective, the author suggests preventing institutional sexual exploitation by addressing such macrosystem factors as national and state policies and legislation, and at the organizational level by implementing risk-management strategies and by training staff in how to have close connections with youth while avoiding sexual misconduct. Providing training, monitoring, and supervision for youth-serving staff to help them maintain appropriate professional boundaries will not only help protect the integrity of the agency but most important, may help prevent institutional child sexual exploitation.

Skarbek, D., Hahn, K., & Parrish, P. (2009). Stop sexual abuse in special education: An ecological model of prevention and intervention strategies for sexual abuse in special education. *Sexuality and Disability*, *27*(3), 155-164.

Children with disabilities are 3.4 times more likely to be sexually abused than their nondisabled peers. Moreover, the abuse will likely be committed by someone they know and trust such as a parent, sibling, teacher, day care provider, priest, or coach. Given this, it is critical that schools implement sexual abuse prevention and intervention programs for children with disabilities. Prevention and intervention programs based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model infused with

the three categories of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary as espoused by the Centers for Disease Control is proposed.

Webster, M. W., & Whitman, J. (2008). Who's lending a hand? A national survey of nonprofit volunteer screening practices. *The National Center for Victims of Crime, Washington, DC (2008, April).*

The vast majority of the reporting organizations indicated that they conduct some form of screening of incoming volunteers, but not all of these organizations conduct thorough screening. The majority of screening organizations conduct an interview of volunteers, but fewer organizations check references, and even fewer conduct full background checks. Organizations with a larger volunteer base were more likely to conduct interviews, reference checks, and background checks. Most organizations that conduct background checks submit volunteers to a name-based criminal records check but use other databases, such as sex offender registries and child and adult protection services. Fingerprint and credit history databases are used far less often. Only about half of the organizations that conduct background checks on prospective volunteers do so in more than one State or use national databases. In addition, the majority of organizations never re-screen volunteers after the initial screening. The majority of organizations reported that they disqualify prospective volunteers for an arrest or conviction for a crime, and the majority of organizations indicated they would disqualify a prospective volunteer for a child-abuse or elder-abuse report. Most organizations do not disqualify persons for having a poor credit history. The survey was conducted between February and April 2007. The organizations surveyed represented the categories of tax-exempt entities deemed most likely to engage volunteers and work with vulnerable clients. 7 tables, 4 figures, and appended description of methodology.