UNDERSTANDING SB1414
(Child Protection)

RECOGNIZING AND PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

FACILITATED BY ALEX HERNANDEZ
Curriculum for Recognizing and Preventing Child Abuse

- Child Abuse is more than bruises and broken bones. While physical abuse is most noticeable, there are other types of child abuse. These include, emotional, sexual and neglect. By learning about abuse and what you can do, you can make a difference in a child’s life. The earlier an abused child gets help, the better chance that child has to heal. Learn about child abuse, break the cycle, and find out how you can help. This program will show you how.

- The teaching methodology for this program are: Lecture, power point presentation, video, class discussion, hands on activities, question and answer, 25 question written test, and take home study material.
Objectives: Upon completion of this workshop the participant will:

- Understand and recognize the symptoms associated with child abuse, sexual abuse, and molestation
- Define the effects of child abuse, sexual abuse and child molestation
- Know the patterns of behavior of child molesters and sex offenders
- Know how to minimize one-on-one isolated encounters between an adult and minor or between two minors
- Know the rules and procedures to address, reduce, and report child abuse, sexual abuse, molestation
- Have an awareness of child abusers who may be crossing the line
- Be aware of available hotlines and counseling services for child abusers
- Know what it takes for a caregiver to maintain self control
- Know how to talk to children who may have been abused
Myths and Truths

- **Myth #1:** It's only abuse if it's violent
- **Truth:** Physical abuse is only one kind. Neglect, emotional, and sexual abuse are just as bad.

- **Myth #2:** Only bad people abuse children
- **Truth:** Not all abusers intentionally harm children. Many have been victims of abuse, and don’t know how to care for children. Others may have mental or substance abuse problems.
Myths and Truths

- **Myth #3**: Child abuse doesn't happen in “good” families
  
  **Truth**: Child abuse crosses all racial, economic, and cultural barriers. It occurs in rich and poor families.

- **Myth #4**: Most child abusers are strangers
  
  **Truth**: Abuse by strangers does happen, but most abusers are friends and family members.
Myths and Truths

- **Myth #5:** Abused children always grow up to be abusers

- **Truth:** The chances of an abused child to repeat their behavior as an adult are greater

- However, many adults who were abused as children do not grow up to be abusers and are actually protectors and excellent caregivers.
The importance of child abuse education

- The earlier child abuse is detected, the better chance of recovery and treatment.
- By learning the warning signs of child abuse and neglect, you can stop the problem and get both, the child and the abuser help.
- But a warning sign doesn’t mean a child is being abused.
- It’s important to look deeper, looking for a pattern of abusive behavior and warning signs.
What is child neglect?

- Failing to provide for a child's basic needs:
  - food
  - clothing
  - hygiene
  - Supervision

- Older children may not show signs of neglect, showing competence to the outside world, and even taking care of siblings.
What is child neglect?

- Sometimes a parent may be physically or mentally unable to care of a child. Due to depression, anxiety, or abuse alcohol/drugs

- Drunk or drugged parents are unable to care for children, make good decisions, and lack self control and can lead to abuse and neglect
Warning signs of neglect in children

- **Ill-fitting clothes**, filthy, inappropriate for the weather
- **Bad hygiene**, (un-bathed, unwashed hair, body odor)
- **Untreated illnesses** and physical injuries
- **Frequently unsupervised or left alone** or allowed to play in unsafe environments
- **Frequently late or missing school**
What are the effects of child neglect?

- Life long pain

- Scars can damage a child’s:
  - self worth
  - relationships with others

- And their ability to function at:
  - home
  - work
  - school
What is emotional abuse?

- Giving the child the **silent treatment**
- Having **limited physical contact** — no hugs, kisses, or signs of affection
- **Belittling, shaming, and humiliation**
- **Name calling** and making negative comparisons
What is emotional abuse?

- Telling a child he or she is “no good,” "worthless," "bad," or "a mistake".
- Yelling, threatening, or bullying.
- Ignoring or rejecting.
- Exposure to violence.
What are the effects of emotional abuse?

- Being told repeatedly that you are stupid or no good, is difficult to overcome. It becomes the child’s reality

- Self esteem is damaged; as an adult, believes they cannot succeed

- Lack of trust and relationship difficulties

- Difficulty expressing emotions
What are the effects of emotional abuse?

- Damages a child’s mental health and social development
- Psychological scars remain for a life time
- Adult survivors struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression, or anger
- Adults/Children may turn to alcohol or drugs to forget the pain
Warning signs of emotional abuse in children

- Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Extremes in behavior (extremely compliant, extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive)
- Lack of attachment to parent or caregiver
- Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, talking...
Discipline Vs Physical Abuse

- There is a **difference** between discipline and physical abuse

- **Discipline** teaches right from wrong

- **Physical abuse** creates fear
What is physical abuse?

- **Physical harm** or injury to the child
- **Severe discipline**; using a belt or inappropriate physical punishment for the age of the child
- **Restraining** a child against their will
- **Exposure** to extreme heat or cold
- **Forcing a child** to overeat
What is physical abuse?

- **Unpredictability of a physical assault.** Having no clear boundaries or rules. Child is never sure what behavior will trigger a physical assault.

- **Lashing out in anger.** Caregivers act out of anger. The angrier the adult, the more intense the physical abuse.

- **Using fear of physical punishment to control behavior.** What the child is learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to behave.

- **Substance abuse also commonly leads to physical abuse**
Warning signs of physical abuse in children

- Unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts
- Always watchful and “on alert,” as if waiting for something bad to happen
- Injuries appear to have a pattern such as marks from a hand or belt
- Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days
What is sexual abuse?

- Exposure to sexual situations or material
- Touching or fondling the private body parts of a child
- Sexual intercourse with a child
- Having the child touch or fondle the private parts of an adult
- Seductive touching or kissing a child
Who is at risk?

- It’s not just girls who are at risk of sexual abuse. **Boys and girls** both suffer from sexual abuse.

- Sexual abuse of **boys** may be under reported due to shame and stigma.
Effects of sexual abuse:

- Creates **guilt and shame**
- Besides physical and emotional damage, sexual abuse causes **life time problems**
- Tormented by shame and guilt. **Child may feel responsible** for the abuse or feel they brought it upon themselves
- Can lead to **self-loathing and sexual problems** as they grow older—excessive promiscuity or an inability to have intimate relations
- **Shame** makes it very difficult for children to come forward. May worry that others won’t believe them or will be angry at them
Warning signs of sexual abuse in children:

- Trouble walking or sitting
- Knowledge or interest in sexual acts or seductive behavior
- Avoids a specific person, no obvious reason
- Refuses to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities
- Pregnancy under the age of 14
- Runs away from home
Tips for talking to an abused child

- **Avoid denial and remain calm.** A common reaction to child abuse is denial and shock. If you display denial, shock or disgust, the child may be afraid and will shut down. Remain reassuring.

- **Don’t interrogate.** Let the child explain to you in his or her own words. Don’t interrogate or ask leading questions. This confuses and flusters the child.
Tips for talking to an abused child

- **Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong.** Reassure the child that you take what is said seriously, and that it is not the child’s fault.

- **Safety comes first.** If your safety or the safety of the child may be threatened if you try to intervene, leave it to the professionals.
Awareness about child molesters

- The belief that a child will be kidnapped and forcibly molested is unlikely.
- Although these incidents do happen, the majority of child molesters are adults who seduce children with subtle intimidation and persuasion, and are known to the child or the parents.
- Sexual predators are scary; however sexual abuse is more common at the hands of someone the child knows and trusts—close relatives and friends.
Patterns of behaviors of child molesters

- He/she may **pretend to be friendly and trustworthy**

- Make children feel comfortable by relating to their interests

- Prefer to have **children as friends** rather than adult friends
Patterns of behaviors of child molesters

- May talk with children as one would talk to an adult in order to equalize the relationship

- May prefer children in a specific age group and one gender over the other

- May work or volunteer with programs involving children

- Will try to make friendships; for example, a mom’s boyfriend spending time with a child and talking about feelings for the child and his own loneliness to gain sympathy
Patterns of behaviors of child molesters

- May take photographs of victims: dressed, nude, or in sexual acts

- May collect child erotica and child-adult pornography, fantasize when no victim is available; relive past sexual activities; justify inappropriate sexual behavior; or blackmail victims to keep them from telling

- May use methods like force, fear, bribery or tricks
Patterns of behaviors of child molesters

- May give alcohol or drugs to potential victims to lower inhibitions or gain favor.

- May seek out organizations that support sexual beliefs and practices.

- May offer to babysit or take children on trips in order to manipulate situations to be near or molest children.
Supervise children at all times

- **Children are not to be left alone** in offices or classrooms without adults present.
- Supervision by a parent of their own children meets the requirements above.
- Parents should be informed of that **supervision before; between and after scheduled classes are the parent’s responsibility**.
Preventing one-on-one encounters

- Organizations need to follow the two person rule.
- Children should be told to avoid one on one encounters with adults and instructed where to go in case they are left alone with an adult.
- Children should be taught that it’s okay to say "no" to anyone who tries to harm them and run away to safety.
- Let the child know that it’s OK to scream if someone is trying to hurt them.
Follow the two person rule

- When interacting with children who are in attendance there must be at least two (2) caregivers present, one of whom is at least eighteen (18) years of age

- Present means no less than one person in the room itself and one nearby observing
Minimize one on one encounters

- A stranger offering a child a ride
- A stranger asking a child for help
- A stranger offering candy or money
- An adult walking a child away to an isolated area
- Meeting a minor at Starbucks for coffee
- Closed door office meetings with minors
- Out of town field trips/over night events
How do you know if someone is crossing the line?

- **The person can’t control their anger.** May start as a small reprimand but gradually raises their voice until they shouting and yelling.

- **The person feels disconnected.** Person feels overwhelmed; does not want to deal with a child’s misbehavior. Person wants to be left alone and for the child to be quiet.

- **Other people have expressed concern.** Consider carefully what people are saying about that person. Denial is not an uncommon reaction.
Professional help is available

- **Professional help is available**: Breaking the cycle of abuse can be very difficult if the patterns are strongly entrenched.

- If a person can’t seem to stop no matter how hard they try, it’s time to get help; be in therapy, take child guidance classes, or take other interventions.
What caregivers should know about self control

- Learn how to get your emotions under control. Be aware of your emotions.

- If a person is temperamental, reactive, or has a “short fuse,” they will have a difficult time getting in touch with their level of emotions.

- Count to ten, take a deep slow breaths, and think before you act and respond.
What caregivers should know about self control

- **Take care of yourself. You need to rest.** Not enough rest and support, or feeling overwhelmed, makes a person more susceptible to anger.

- **Anger causes stress and over the long run will hurt you physically, mentally and emotionally.**

- **People who are under constant stress, get sick more often, age quicker, and die sooner.**
Caregivers may need to recognize abusive behavior in themselves.

Professional help is available:

- Call 1-800-4-A-CHILD to find support and resources that can help you break the cycle of abuse.
- 1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368) Stop It Now
- 1-800-422-4453 Crisis Counseling Help
- 1-800-656-4673 Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
Reporting child abuse

- If you suspect child abuse, it’s your responsibility to see that the child gets help

- Many people are reluctant to report child abuse

- Understanding some of the concerns behind reporting may help put your mind at ease
Concerns about reporting child abuse

- I don’t want to interfere in someone else’s family. Child abuse effects are lifelong, affecting relationships, self-esteem, and putting more children at risk. Help break the cycle.

- What if I break up someone’s home? A report does not mean a child is automatically removed from the home - unless the child is clearly in danger.
Concerns about reporting child abuse

- **They will know it was me who called.** Reporting is anonymous. The child abuser cannot find out who made the report of child abuse.

- **What I have to say It won’t make a difference.** Better to be safe than sorry. Even if you don’t see the whole picture, others may have noticed as well, and a pattern can help identify child abuse.
Where do I report violations of child abuse

- Your Department Head
- Employee Relations Department: 915-831-6630
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
  - 1-800-252-5400
- EL Paso Child Protective Services
  - 915-542-4535
  - 915-629-3321
  - 915-747-4671
- Or call the Stop It Now helpline to report any sexual abuse of children at (888) PREVENT - that is, (888) 773-8368
Sources

- www.americanhumane.org/
- www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_abuse
- www.helpguide.org/.../child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_negl...
- www.jimhopper.com/abstats
- www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan.cfm