
Child Protection Update 1: Making virtual school safer and appropriate terminology

Dear leaders in child protection,

These updates will include the latest child protection news, links to new resources on the Education Portal, and a short commentary based on the topics requested by IS educators or taken from a recent serious case review.. We hope you'll consider sharing this information widely within your community of educators.

New Resources:

Safer Virtual Schools Infographic came at the request of a full-time virtual school. This is a downloadable and editable document. If you have suggestions, please let us know. You'll find it under [School Policies](#) and [here](#).

Intimate Care Policy Elements Created at the request of professionals, this compiles model practice and statutory guidance from several countries on contact and non-contact support of toileting, dressing, and intimate care for those writing school policies and procedures for Early Years and disability inclusive programs. Find this resource in [School Policies](#) and [here](#).

You can always locate important new resources in [Resource Spotlight](#) at [EdPortal.ICMEC.org](#).

Program Update::

Regional Trainer program application launched We have had many supportive emails from HOS nominating their staff. The most common question is whether CIS training is accepted, and the answer is yes. The [application](#) includes the criteria and timeline. Successful applicants will be notified by mid-April.

International Centre Response Team (ICRT) A short video explanation was shown at AAIE last month. You may share it with [this link](#). The FAQs and the application link for confidential considerations of anonymized cases is [here](#).

Case Lessons to Share: Positive Leadership Attitudes

Problematic language can be used by us all in well-meaning ways. However, we need to be attentive to inadvertently perpetuating unhelpful and even harmful beliefs. Serious case reviews make clear that uninformed leadership attitudes can discredit response and entrench bias.

Avoid calling abuse unthinkable

This feels truthful - even empathetic, but sends a message to victims that they won't be believed. It signals a lack of awareness of prevalence, and undermines support for reporting by reflecting a certainty of safety. More helpful to an ethos of prevention of all forms of abuse, both institutional and intrafamilial, is the belief that all forms of abuse can happen here, or more accurately, likely happen here.

We can all promote safety by gently challenging colleagues who say they were 'lucky' and abuse 'never' happened during their leadership. This is not to promote guilt, but to acknowledge that *identifying and addressing child protection concerns means you're doing something right, not wrong!*

Don't use terms like pedophile and predator

No one can envision a respected parent or admired teacher as either of these things, not to mention a 'monster'. These pejorative terms imply male offenders and prevent us from seeing harm in the actions of people who are likeable, talented or even female.

Propagate protective leadership

Help challenge widely held beliefs, often cited in case reviews, that perpetuate inappropriate response to abuse.

Affirm in your professional exchanges:

- Safety is not equal to few or no disclosures. Victim disclosure of abuse in childhood is rare. It is also commonly refuted, dismissed, or missed entirely by adults.
- Statistically speaking, for every false allegation someone shares, they should have dozens of recanted true allegations to share. Recanting is so common it reinforces the myth of false allegations.
- Positive conduct reports cannot contradict or outweigh negative ones. Enough said.
- The standard of proof required for action is far below certainty. The fire department does not ask you to prove there is a fire, they take you seriously when you call.
- Adults have a well-researched affinity and preference for adults. This prevents adults from seeking or validating children's experiences and opinions. Many might think educators are an exception. Hello, unconscious bias.

Case reviews repeatedly identify the critical leadership error of insufficient response to inappropriate or harmful behavior. Insufficient response always erodes the climate of protection. It conveys acceptance and normalization of harm, and results in fewer disclosures, reduced bystander reporting, and more abuse. For more on appropriate response see the ITFCP Allegation Protocol.

Source case for this commentary: A serious case review of abuse over decades at St.Paul's school released as part of the UK Inquiry into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). Let us know if you'd like a copy of the executive summary.

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