

## Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe Program Overview

Childhelp has offered a version of primary child abuse prevention curricula to children in schools since the initial Good Touch Bad Touch program was released in 1983. This program evolved into Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe in 2011 and continues to be updated regularly with the most current research and best practices for child-based prevention education.

Today, Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe is an evidence-based primary prevention curriculum aimed at stopping and preventing child abuse, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, bullying, and cyberbullying. The content and delivery of the Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade curricula are based on several areas of research including child development, learning styles, social psychology, and child abuse and neglect prevention. The two lessons at each grade level are written to promote broad student participation and critical reflection by engaging students in visual, auditory, and physical learning.

A primary focus at the earlier age groups is to shift the responsibility for child abuse and neglect prevention away from the child and onto the adults in the children's lives as much as possible. A key component of this shift includes teacher/classroom reinforcement activities and parent and caregiver information and activities with an understanding that these components may or may not be utilized. The child component of the curriculum incorporates child abuse prevention strategies in a way that can stand alone as an effective preventive effort.

Because parents of younger children may have a particular sensitivity around discussions of this nature, the curriculum does not include words such as "sex" or "sexual" at the earlier grade levels, and encourages parents and caregivers to work with the child on naming the body parts, learning which body parts are private, and when it's acceptable for them to be public, e.g., at the doctor or if an adult is helping a small child bathe or get dressed. This process respects the role of the parent and caregiver in maintaining control over the discussion. In addition, to address the concern of instilling unnecessary fear and worry in children who participate in child abuse prevention programs, an emphasis has been placed on learning through interesting and fun activities.

Every lesson across all grade levels of the Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe curriculum reinforces the same primary ideas through age-appropriate instruction and interaction. The big ideas included in each lesson are these:

- **Safety** - Safety can be defined as care, security, protection, shelter, well-being, welfare, and absence of danger. In addition to defining safety as a general term, lessons also introduce specific safety concepts. At the early grade levels, those concepts are (a) you are special and deserve to be safe; (b) there are rules that can help keep you safe; (c) adults are responsible for keeping you safe; (d) you have body parts that are private, these body parts are those covered by a bathing suit; and (e) how to identify and talk about the different types of abuse. These concepts are elaborated as age-and developmentally-appropriate at the higher grade levels.
- **You deserve to be safe** - Children have a right to be kept safe because they are not physically, emotionally, or cognitively prepared to deal with harmful, potentially risky, or dangerous situations or people.
- **Child safety is an adult's responsibility** - This concept is repeated often, and in many contexts, throughout all lessons of the curriculum. Facilitators reinforce this concept in combination with helping children identify safe adults.
- **There are safe adults** - A safe adult is described as an adult who is reliable, dependable, trustworthy, careful, and protective, and who follows the five Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe safety rules. Facilitators work with children to help them identify the safe adults in their lives.
- **Five Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe safety rules** - These five safety rules are taught and reinforced at every grade level, with an emphasis on how to make them a part of everyday living for children. They are adapted into age-appropriate safety principles for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades.
  1. *It's MY Body!*
  2. *Ask an adult if I am safe.*
  3. *I have choices.*
  4. *Tell someone.*
  5. *It's NEVER my fault!*

The overarching goal with this curriculum is always to provide children the skills to identify and be able to approach a safe adult should they ever be in a situation in which they are unsure if they are safe.