



# Preventing Peer-to-Peer Abuse at Your Organization

## *A Facilitator's Guide for In-Person Training*

This Facilitator's Guide was developed to accompany the *Preventing Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse at Your Organization* webinar on June 8th, 2021. There are two ways to deploy it:

1. We have developed and shared a slide deck which you can present yourself, adapting it to your specific organizational context and needs.

Or

2. You can play the recording of the webinar, and pause where appropriate—using the Facilitator's Guide as a prompt for discussion questions and engagement.

Whichever direction you choose, the key is to make sure that the discussion and questions are geared toward the practical, day-to-day realities of running your organization.

*Note on Format: We have highlighted the main talking points for each slide, as well as optional discussion questions throughout that will allow you to enhance the conversation and apply the content specifically to your organization.*

### **Slide 1: Title Slide**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

This is an opportunity to set the scene, and make sure your staff are ready to engage with an incredibly tough topic.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Acknowledge that this can be a tough topic, and that some may have personal experience. Give permission for people to step away if needed, and encourage them to seek help.
- Explain to staff that this is a critically important part of doing their job, and part of their professional and moral responsibility.
- Emphasize that what they learn today may help prevent life-altering abuse.

### **Slide 2: Learning Objectives**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

Establish a specific and measurable set of goals for the end of the training.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Run through the three main objectives, so they understand what they should be able to take away by the end of the training.

### **Slide 3: What is Peer-to-Peer Abuse?**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

Be sure staff understand the full range of activities that may constitute peer-to-peer abuse.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Point out wide range of types and severity of abuse.
- Emphasize that while it might involve physical sex acts, it also may not.
- Emphasize that porn, sexting, even sexualized language are all potentially abusive.

#### **Slide 4: Minors and Consent**

##### **Purpose of Slide:**

This is an emphasis slide/opportunity to pause and discuss why we must have zero tolerance for all types of sexual activity.

##### **Talking Points:**

- Acknowledge that no matter the age (3, 8 or 16), any minor engaging in any sexual act with another minor is considered peer-to-peer abuse.
- Even what you may think of as teenage ‘exploration’ is to be considered abuse in a youth-serving environment—and cannot be tolerated at your organization.

##### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- What would you do if you found a teen couple—who appear to be dating—making out in a back room?
- Are there any scenarios that come to mind that you may be doubting if it’s considered abuse or not? (If staff do share a scenario, this is where to reiterate that any form of sexual activity between minors is considered abuse at your organization.)

#### **Slide 5: Assumption vs Reality—Societal Misconceptions Around Abuse**

##### **Purpose of Slide:**

Encourage critical reflection of staff’s current preconceptions about abuse—and then expand their understanding of what types of abuse they need to be watching out for.

##### **Talking Points:**

- Run through assumptions of abuse as adult-to-child, predatory, and something that can be ‘kept out’ with background checks and other measures.
- Emphasize that this type of abuse really does happen, but it is not the only type.
- Then run through the realities of peer-to-peer abuse—that it appears to be just as common, and that it is often related more to bullying than sex. Remind them that it doesn’t have to involve touch or sex acts.
- Encourage staff to understand and believe that abuse could, and probably has, happened or is happening at their organization.

##### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- When you thought about abuse before this training, what image came to mind? Keep that in mind as you take this training—and see how it changes.

#### **Slide 6: How Does it Happen?**

##### **Purpose of Slide:**

An opportunity to focus on the key dynamics or factors that are often present when abuse happens, and may contribute to risk.

##### **Talking Points:**

- Emphasize wide range of participants—ages, genders, etc.
- Explain that the key differentiator is bullying and power

### **Slide 7: It's Not Just About Sex Acts**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

This simply is an opportunity to pause and emphasize the point that peer-to-peer abuse is primarily power-driven and is rooted in bullying.

#### **Talking Points:**

- The primary concern is situations where weaker, younger or less powerful youth are targeted.
- If youth are being coerced, and if there is sexual content, then it is potentially abusive and always unacceptable.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- What types of power dynamics do you see between youth at our organization that might be problematic? What can we do to mitigate them?

### **Slide 8: Assumption vs. Reality—Prevalence of Abuse**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

This is an option to challenge any sense of safety or complacency.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Run through assumptions presented on the slide.
- Major incidents escalate from minor ones.
- Explain that stats are based only on Redwoods investigations—one insurance company that focuses on youth-serving organizations—and is likely an under-reported problem.

### **Slide 9: Peer-to-Peer Abuse Has Happened or is Happening**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

This is an emphasis slide, to encourage staff to discuss their own attitudes to likelihood of risk.

#### **Talking Points:**

- The key takeaway is simply that they must assume that it has or is occurring.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- Have you seen peer-to-peer abuse at your organization? Could it be happening without you knowing it?

### **Slide 10: Example #1—Unsupervised Bathroom**

*Note: This is the first of three slides based on real-world incidents. Details have been changed to respect survivors' right to privacy, and the goal is to demonstrate how peer-to-peer abuse happens—not to understand every detail of a specific incident. We encourage you to adapt these stories to fit your organization's work.*

#### **Talking Points:**

- Explain that this happened during programming.
- Three youth asked to be excused—the oldest coerced the second oldest boy to act as look out.

- The oldest boy then forced the youngest to perform oral sex.
- The victim only disclosed what happened to a parent a year later.

**Key Lessons to Emphasize:**

- Abuse usually escalates from bullying.
- Any unsupervised bathroom breaks are a major risk.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How can we prevent an incident like this from happening at our organization?

**Slide 11: Example #2—Teens Sneak Off**

**Talking Points:**

- Two teens asked to be excused during free time to use the bathroom, and instead snuck into a back room.
- They performed oral sex on each other.
- One later came forward to say that they had been coerced.

**Key Lessons to Emphasize:**

- Sexual activity between minors, even within a ‘dating’ context, should be considered to be potentially abusive, and always unacceptable at your organization.
- From a legal perspective, it is not consensual and creates significant risk for your organization.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How can we prevent an incident like this from happening at our organization?

**Slide 12: Example #3—Playing Fort**

**Talking Points:**

- Explain that two young kids were allowed to create a fort in a childcare room.
- One used a functional toy camera to take photos of the other’s private parts.
- There may also have been other sex acts involved.

**Key Lessons to Emphasize:**

- Abuse can happen between younger children too.
- Line of sight is central for prevention as even small, temporary obstructions create risk.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How can we prevent an incident like this from happening at our organization?

**Slide 13: Assumption vs. Reality—Abuse Requires Complete Privacy**

**Purpose of Slide:**

Emphasize that while some areas are riskier than others, abuse can happen anywhere.

**Talking Points:**

- Run through and expand on the assumptions presented on the slide.
- Explain that supervision is key to prevention—but that this requires active engagement, and constant vigilance.
- Share that abuse cases can and do happen in full view of staff.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- Do you think abuse could happen when you're in the same room without you noticing? Why or why not?
- Where might abuse happen even if we are in the same room?

**Slide 14: Where and When Does it Happen?****Purpose of Slide:**

To highlight the most common locations where you will find peer-to-peer abuse—typically locations and times when youth think there is less supervision.

**Talking Points:**

- Discuss general characteristics of locations—privacy and/or obscured views.
- Discuss general characteristics of times—chaos/disorder/distraction or lack of supervision.
- Emphasize that these are things to watch for—but nowhere is 100% safe. Think about the characteristics and look for them everywhere.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- Where do you think youth might believe there is less supervision at our organization?
- How can we structure transition times, so that youth are supervised 100% of the time?

**Slide 15: Nowhere is 'Safe'****Purpose of Slide:**

This is an opportunity to emphasize the takeaway from the last slide: while there are danger spots, re-emphasize there are also no 100% 'safe' spots.

**Talking Points:**

- Emphasize that risks in previous slide are things to watch for—but nowhere is 100% safe.
- Remind them that abuse cases—even severe ones—have happened with staff in the room, or on camera.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- What physical obstructions might make it hard to spot abuse specifically at your organization? How about environmental challenges—for example noise or crowds?

**Slide 16: We Can Create an Environment Where Abuse Cannot Happen****Purpose of Slide:**

Having explained that staff need to be constantly vigilant, and that risks are everywhere, it is important to encourage staff that prevention is possible.

**Talking Points:**

- Acknowledge how important it is to assume abuse is happening or has happened. But also acknowledge that this can be daunting/depressing.
- Share the good news that simple, practical steps—if followed closely—can create environments where abuse can't happen.

**Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How is everyone feeling—nervous, discouraged, inspired? (Acknowledge any concerns, then explain that you'll be moving on to cover practical tips to help them succeed.)

### **Slide 17: Engage Actively with Youth**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

To focus on the idea of active, engaged supervision.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Explain difference between passively 'watching' youth and active supervision.
- Remind staff that this is about really knowing youth—building close but professional relationships to make it easier to spot any unusual or out-of-the-ordinary behavior.
- This also builds trust so youth can feel safe to come forward.
- Consider referring back to Example #2 (Teens Sneak Off), and pointing out that the teen who later disclosed abuse might have disclosed earlier if they had someone to talk to.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How have you been able to build real, authentic but professional relationships with youth?
- What should we do if we do notice a change in demeanor in a youth?

### **Slide 18: Prevent Risky Situations**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

Focus on broader prevention measures.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Remind staff to be aware of power dynamics.
- Emphasize importance of rules and supervision protocols such as no alone time. Consider referring back to Example #1. (Unsupervised Bathroom)
- Emphasize importance of modeling behaviors like respect and open communication.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- What should we do if we do notice a change in demeanor? Where are you most concerned abuse could happen at your organization? How might you make it safer?
- How can we prevent alone time between two youth?

### **Slide 19: Identify Red-Flag Behaviors**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

In order to intervene, you have to know what abuse might look like and what behaviors can lead to abuse.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Walk staff through the specific red-flags on the slide.
- Make it very clear that no list can be exhaustive—some behaviors may be abusive that don't look like it on paper. Consider referring back to Example #3 (Playing Fort) and pointing out it likely looked like innocent play.
- Encourage staff to listen to their gut reactions and instincts.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- What types of situations have you witnessed that might or might not be abusive?

- How should we respond to these red-flag behaviors in the moment?

### **Slide 20: Stop Conflict Before It Escalates**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

Encourage a pro-active, anti-bullying stance—and make it clear that this is directly connected to abuse prevention.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Reiterate the direct connection to bullying and the importance of stopping initial instances of bullying right away before it escalates.
- Explain the need for victim-centered approach—the priority is helping the victim heal, not simply ‘making peace.’
- Remind staff to follow all protocols and seek guidance.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How do we prevent bullying at our organization?
- How do we stop bullying behavior immediately before it escalates into something worse?

### **Slide 21: When We Are Ready to Respond, We Become a Lifeline for Youth**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

Make sure that staff know that—even with best prevention—they may still have to respond to disclosure or discovery of abuse.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Repeat that we can greatly reduce—and perhaps even eliminate—peer-to-peer abuse from our organizations.
- But no organization is an island.
- Whether at the organization—or in the community—someone may still disclose abuse.
- We need to be ready.

### **Slide 22: How Do You Respond to Abuse?**

#### **Purpose of Slide:**

To cover the specifics of how to respond.

#### **Talking Points:**

- Run through the main steps presented in the slide.
- Explain that most of this is what you need to do if anyone discloses abuse—either adult-to-child or peer-to-peer.
- Remind staff of the importance of putting the victim first—and on promoting healing.
- Emphasize that they must notify supervisors, and also follow all mandated reporter laws.

#### **Optional Discussion Questions:**

- How confident are you in responding to abuse? Let’s review our mandated reporter laws.
- What challenges do you foresee in responding if someone does disclose abuse to you?

### **Slide 23: We Must Have Zero Tolerance for Abuse**

**Purpose of Slide:**

This is the closing slide, and the final takeaway.

**Talking Points:**

- We encourage you to develop your own closing pitch for why this is important for your organization—but the key takeaway is that peer-to-peer abuse, like adult-to-child abuse, can ruin lives, create lasting damage and threaten the broader mission of the work you do. There is no place for such behavior at an organization dedicated to working with youth.