

Joint Task Force on Children’s Justice and Child Sexual Abuse – Erin’s Law



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What is the Joint Task Force?

The Joint Task Force on Children’s Justice and Child Sexual Abuse (JTF) was created by statute in 1985 by the Tennessee General Assembly, which enacted legislation requiring the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (TDCS) to develop a task force to address the state’s response to child sexual abuse and other forms of severe abuse—detection, intervention, prevention, and treatment. TDCS works closely with the JTF, a group of child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health professionals, and representatives from state child-serving agencies throughout Tennessee who are appointed by the TDCS commissioner to help fulfill this task.

Child Sexual Abuse Definition and Prevalence

The Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS) has adopted a definition of child sexual abuse that includes “any sexual acts involving a child under the age of 13 or was under the age of 13 when the abuse occurred, or a child is age 13 – 18 and meets the relationship criteria per the Department’s policy.”¹ Child sexual abuse includes acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator involving the following:

- Explicit sexual acts;
- Vaginal, oral, anal or digital penetration with or without the use of an object;

¹ Tennessee Department of Children’s Services [Definitions of Abuse/Neglect](#)



- Touching, fondling, molestation or intentional contact with genitals, buttocks or breasts of child or perpetrator. This also includes when adolescents or adults instruct children to engage in such behaviors with each other;
- Indecent exposure and voyeurism; and
- Intentionally exposing a child to sexually explicit material.
- Any acts defined as sexual abuse by the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) ²

Child sexual abuse also means sexual behaviors or situations in which the motivation may or may not be sexual, but there is a clear sexual component such as:

- Taking pictures or videos of children engaging in sexual activities or in sexually explicit poses;
- Making children available to others for sexual purposes;
- The sexual gratification or benefit of an adult;
- The solicitation of a minor by requesting or inviting a minor to engage in sexual activity, even if the solicitation did not result in a sexual act. The solicitating communication can include spoken word, electronic mail or internet services, and text or photo messages;
- Use of a child for prostitution; and
- Caregiver has knowledge or reasonable suspicion of child sexual abuse by another person and intentionally fails to intervene or protect child.
- Sexual harassment within congregate care facilities where youth are placed.

The Department defines Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM) as the use of any person under the age of eighteen (18) in exchange for anything of value either directly or indirectly. Force, threat or coercion is not a factor for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (CSEM).

For screening purposes, a report may be submitted for investigation of CSEM without direct allegations of Child Sexual Abuse as defined above when a reasonable suspicion of CSEM exists which may include one (1) or more of the below risk factors:

- Chronic Runaway;
- Large amounts of cash or prepaid cards;
- Dramatic increase of material possessions with no other explanation;
- Hotel keys, receipts, etc.;
- Older "boyfriend" or overtly concerned/controlling male OR FEMALE;
- Personal items don't reflect living situation;
- Multiple Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's);
- Unexplained injuries; and/or
- Significant change in behavior.

² Tennessee Department of Children's Services <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/juvenile-justice/prea.html>



*Child sexual abuse is **more prevalent** than the U.S. public would like to believe. It is widespread, **children of all ages, races, and ethnicities experience child sexual abuse.***

Here are some other key findings from the CDC about child sexual abuse:³



One in four girls and **one in 20 boys** experience child sexual abuse at some point in childhood.



Most children are **sexually abused by someone they know and trust.**



In 2019, there were **over 41 million videos of child sexual abuse reported compared to five years** ago when there were less than 350,000.



Physical force is very rarely used, rather the offender uses manipulation such as bribes, gifts and games.



More than 80% of child sexual abuse cases never come to the attention of Child Protective Services (CPS) or law enforcement.



Children often do not tell because they are afraid they will not be believed or they worry about what a disclosure would do to their family.



There is no typical offender—they come from all walks of life. It happens not only in impoverished areas but in affluent communities as well.

What is Erin's Law?

Erin's Law focuses on preventing child sexual abuse and was signed into law in Tennessee in 2014 under Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-601 and further defined in Tennessee Code Annotated 49-6-1304 - Family life instruction. The bill is named after Erin Merryn, an Illinois native who was sexually abused as a child. For more information on Erin's Law, please visit www.erinslaw.org.

This law requires schools across the state to provide age-appropriate instruction to students on personal body safety, how to report sexual abuse, human trafficking, and internet crimes against children. The law states:

A family life curriculum shall, to the extent that the topic and the manner of communication is age-appropriate...

13. Provide instruction on the detection, intervention, prevention, and treatment of:

³ CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/about-child-sexual-abuse.html>



a. Child sexual abuse, including such abuse that may occur in the home, in accordance with the declarations and requirements of §§ 37-1-601(a) and 37-1-603(b)(3); and

b. Human trafficking in which the victim is a child; and

c. Internet crimes against children involving sexting, sextortion, and the exploitation of a minor, which includes the following offenses:

(i) Solicitation of a minor, as defined in § 39-13-528;

(ii) Soliciting sexual exploitation of a minor, as defined in § 39-13-529(a);

(iii) Exploitation of a minor by electronic means, as defined in § 39-13-529(b);

(iv) Sexual exploitation of a minor, as defined in § 39-17-1003;

(v) Aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor, as defined in § 39-17-1004; and

(vi) Especially aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor, as defined in § 39-17-1005;

Practice Guidelines

Tennessee's Joint Task Force (JTF) on Children's Justice and Child Sexual Abuse in partnership with the Department of Children's Services, Department of Education and State Board of Education adopted a set of practice guidelines for Tennessee schools to consider for addressing the issue of child sexual abuse and requirements of Erin's Law. These guidelines are based on the current evidence on the subject. While the guidelines and resources in this document are primarily intended to help school districts, it is the hope of the JTF that other professionals working with children and youth could also use this document as a point of reference.

- Programs should include techniques to teach children to recognize child sexual abuse, equip them with skills to reduce their vulnerability and encourage them to report the abuse.
- Programs should include more than one session, ideally, at least four (Davis & Gidyez, 2000). Recognizing the importance and effectiveness of an environmental design, programs may include such building interventions as visual aids displayed throughout the school, reinforcing the concepts learned within the prevention program (Taylor, Stein, Woods, Mumford & Mennemeier, 2011).
- Programs should be conducted at least annually, building on skills learned the previous year, and should be developmentally appropriate for each grade level. Programs should involve children as active learning participants and to be most effective, should include discussion, modeling and role playing (Davis & Gidyez, 2000).
- Programs should have the capacity to be delivered by a wide range of personnel (Barron & Topping, 2010). Acknowledging the varying resources and staffing patterns of each school, prevention programs should have the capacity to be delivered by a wide range of



professionals, including teachers, school counselors, outside agency prevention educators, etc. Professionals delivering these prevention programs should have a thorough knowledge of child sexual abuse, including how to respond appropriately to disclosures.

- Programs should include an evaluation component with measurable outcomes.
- Programs should be culturally sensitive and adaptable for use within varying school contexts (age, race, special needs, etc.).
- Although we recognize that thorough research is limited on the efficacy of specific child sexual abuse prevention programs, we recommend that schools seek to implement programs that include an evidence-based curriculum.
- Programs must include a professional training component for administrators, teachers and other school personnel on talking to students about child sexual abuse prevention, effects of child sexual abuse on children, handling disclosures, and mandated reporting.
- Recognizing that parents play a key role in protecting children from abuse, programs must include a component to encourage parental involvement within the child sexual abuse prevention program. This component should inform parents about child sexual abuse topics including but not limited to characteristics of offenders, grooming behaviors and how to discuss this topic with their children (Kenny, 2010).

Prevention Curricula Overview

Erin's law emphasizes the importance of educational programs that help prevent sexual abuse by using age-appropriate techniques to instruct children on how to recognize and report sexual abuse. Recognizing the need to provide school personnel with a diversity of curricula and resources, the JTF, in consultation with DCS Children's Advisory Council, reviewed a variety of existing prevention curricula; and have identified a number of free or low-cost resources and trainings that Tennessee public schools can utilize to train school personnel who interact with children and youth on how to prevent, recognize, and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse.

While the resources in this document are primarily intended to help school districts, it is the hope of the JTF that other professionals working with children and youth could also use this document as a point of reference. The JTF does not promote any specific prevention curriculum or training, but rather identifies existing, evidence-based resources from state and other agencies on child sexual abuse prevention instruction for grades Pre-K-12.



Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Curricula

Childhelp – Speak Up Be Safe

Audience: Grades Pre K – 12

Cost: Varies

Website: <https://www.childhelp.org/subs/the-curriculum/>

This **evidence-based child abuse prevention education program** provides fully scripted, age-appropriate lessons in grades PK-12, plus in-depth facilitator training. Lessons build safety skills and resistance strategies to help youth prevent and interrupt various types of abuse physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying, and cyber abuse. Childhelp requires that every person who intends to deliver Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe lessons is a certified facilitator. Facilitator training is available on demand via the LMS at www.speakupbesafe.org and is included when a school, school district, or community organization purchases the curriculum.

MBF Child Safety Matters

Audience: Children in grades K-5, their parents/guardians, and personnel at the children's school

Cost: Varies (Delivered for free by some Child Advocacy Centers)

Website: www.mbfpreventioneducation.org

MBF Child Safety Matters® is an evidence-based curriculum available to elementary schools and organizations partnering with elementary schools to educate and empower students, school personnel, and parents with information and universal Safety Rules and strategies to prevent many types of victimization. The curriculum is designed to be practical and easy for schools to implement. MBF Child Safety Matters covers bullying, cyberbullying, four types of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional and neglect), digital abuse, and other digital dangers in two classroom lessons ranging from 35-55 minutes (or in 4 shorter lessons). The program also provides reinforcement materials and activities for students, parents, and schools.

Play it Safe!®

Audience: Grades Pre K – 12

Cost: Online pre-K-2nd grades is \$229.00 per grade and online and hardcopy is \$329.00 per grade; online for 3rd grade is \$179.00 per grade and online and hardcopy is \$229.00 per grade. For the cost of the videos for grades Pre K -12, please contact Diane Mayfield at

dmayfield@womenscentertc.org **Website:** <https://www.playitsafe.org/>

This child abuse awareness and prevention program uses age-appropriate materials to educate children Pre-K through high school in ways they can best learn and respond. Scripts and videos are developed through an **evidence-based approach** to teach children and teens how to reduce their risk of sexual and physical abuse by recognizing potentially abusive behavior, responding appropriately to threatening situations, and reporting abuse to a trusted adult. Some of the program



topics include safe, unsafe, and confusing touch for elementary-aged children and sexting, healthy relationships and dating violence for middle and high school-aged children.

The Safe Child Program

Audience: Grades PreK-3

Cost: Free

Website: <https://safechild.org/prevention-of-child-abuse-program/>

Overview: The Safe Child Prevention of Child Abuse Program is a free comprehensive curriculum that teaches prevention of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse for children ages 3-11 utilizing a broad base of life skills and specific role-play-based applications. Believing that it is never a good idea to reinvent the wheel, these grade-level programs are provided as a starting point. Each country should adopt programs to reflect cultural norms and language.

Safe Touches

Audience: Grades K-3

Cost: Varies

Website: <https://nyspcc.org/what-we-do/training-institute/professional-trainings-and-resources/safe-touches/touches>

Overview: Safe Touches - A Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program for Children is designed for children in kindergarten through third grade (K-3). Specially trained facilitators use puppets to talk about body safety concepts and help children learn and practice key safety skills. The workshop is classroom-based (approximately 25-30 children per workshop) and lasts 45-50 minutes, including a question-and-answer session at the end. After the workshop, children are given an age-appropriate activity booklet on body safety to complete at home with their caregivers and encourage continued conversations about sexual abuse prevention. Teachers are also provided with a link to a video of a recorded puppet skit with follow-up questions. They are encouraged to play the video for the children one week after the workshop to reemphasize the safety skills taught in the workshop.

Safer, Smarter Kids! (Lauren's Kids)

Audience: Grades PreK-5, teachers, and parents

Cost: \$1,200

Website: <https://safersmarterkids.org/home/>

Overview: Safer, Smarter Kids!, a school-based sexual-abuse prevention program, is designed to provide children with knowledge, skills, and tools they can use to keep themselves safe and protect themselves from abuse.



Second Step

Audience: Grades K-5

Cost: \$1,129.00

Website: <https://www.secondstep.org/child-protection>

This **research-based training** was created by Committee for Children, an organization active in the field of child sexual abuse prevention for nearly 40 years. The Second Step Child Protection Unit takes a holistic approach to a school community's efforts to protect students. Online training modules guide administrators through child protection policies and procedures, train all staff to recognize and respond to indicators of abuse and neglect, and teach educators to deliver the classroom lessons to students in Early Learning through Grade 5. Easy-to-follow, scripted lessons teach children safety skills using age-appropriate instruction, giving kids the know-how and avenues to disclose abuse. Family materials explain what children are learning, alleviate anxiety, and provide guidance for talking to kids about safe and unsafe touch.



Human Trafficking & Sexual Exploitation Prevention Curricula

My Life My Choice

Audience: Youth ages 12-18

Cost: \$665 to become a facilitator; MLMC requires that modules be facilitated by at least 2 certified facilitators

Website: <https://www.mylifemychoice.org/>

My Life My Choice Curriculum is an evidence-based ten-session exploitation prevention curriculum that equips disproportionately vulnerable young people between the ages of 12 and 18 with the tools and knowledge needed to protect themselves from exploiters, thus reducing their risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The My Life My Choice Curriculum is gender-responsive, but designed specifically for adolescent girls at greatest risk of exploitation.

The Nest Foundation: You Belong Here & Child Safety Basics

Audience: K – 12

Cost: Varies

Website: <https://www.nestfoundation.org/curricula/you-belong-here>

You Belong Here is a comprehensive violence prevention curriculum designed to transform communities by addressing violence at every level. YBH is crafted for all students from Kindergarten to High School. The curriculum is structured to be implemented across grade levels, progressively building on skills acquired at developmentally suitable stages. In addition to drawing from evidence-based practices in clinical psychology, counselling psychology, and community psychology, the curriculum incorporates crucial skills such as becoming an active bystander, internet safety, and critical thinking.

Internet Safety Curricula

NetSmartz

Cost: Free

Website: <https://www.missingkids.org/NetSmartz/home>

NetSmartz is the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's online safety education program. It provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children be safer online with the goal of helping children to become more aware of potential online risks and empowering them to help prevent victimization by making safer choices on- and offline. This site also includes a cybertip line link or toll-free telephone number for reporting incidents.



Tennessee-Based Resources: *Child Advocacy Centers*

(Below is a list of Child Advocacy Centers who can provide Erin's Law curriculum to students in schools at little to no cost)

WEST TENNESSEE

Carl Perkins Center

Counties Served: Fayette

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Haley Duffey, 901-235-7283

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Child Advocacy Center for the 23rd Judicial District

Counties Served: Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters and Teen Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Kelsey Cantrell (kelsey@23rdcac.org)

Davis House Child Advocacy Center

Counties Served: Williamson

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child and Teen Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Carrie Norvell (carrie@davishousecac.org) 615.790.5900

Junior's House CAC

Counties Served: Lincoln, Bedford, Moore and Marshall

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Brandy Paulus (preventionspecialist@juniorshousecac.org) 931-438-3233



Upper Cumberland Child Advocacy Center

Counties Served: Putnam, White, Dekalb, Overton, Clay, Pickett, Cumberland

Curriculum Offered: Second Step

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Tracy Plant Bucholz (uppercumberlandcac@gmail.com) 931-854-0115

EAST TENNESSEE

Campbell County Children's Center

Counties Served: Campbell, Claiborne and Union

Curriculum: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Jen Smith (jen@campbellcountychildrenscenter.org)

Children's Advocacy Center of the First Judicial District

Counties Served: Carter, Johnson, Washington and Unicoi

Curriculum Offered: Happy Bear Skit and Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Happy Bear - No/Child Safety Matters - Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: MaKenna Lewis (mlewis@cac1st.org)

Child Advocacy Center of the 9th Judicial District

Counties Served: Loudon, Meigs, Morgan and Roane

Curriculum Offered: Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN)

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Crystal Deinhart (crystal@cac9jd.org)

Children's Center of the Cumberlands

Counties Served: Scott and Fentress

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters and Teen Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Angel Sexton (angelsexton@highland.net) 423-569-8900



Children's Advocacy Center of Hamilton County

Counties Served: Hamilton

Curriculum Offered: Lauren's Kids

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Kenzie Moon (kmoon@cachc.org) 423-266-6918

Child Help

Counties Served: Knox, Scott, Campbell, Union, Claiborne, Grainger, Hamblin, Jefferson, Cocke, Sevier, Blount, Loudon, Monroe, Roane, Morgan, Anderson

Curriculum Offered: Speak Up Be Safe

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: Varies based on delivery options. Childhelp can provide the curriculum directly within the school, or provide a train the trainer model, or provide the curriculum through a virtual training.

Contact for More Information: Brook Ivy (bivy@childhelp.org) 865-637-1753

H.O.P.E Center, Inc. 10th Judicial District Children's Advocacy Center

Counties Served: McMinn, Bradley, Polk and Monroe

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Kelley Weber May (weberk99@thehopecenterinc.com) 423-829-0666

Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center

Counties Served: Sevier, Cocke, Grainger and Jefferson

Curriculum Offered: Monique Burr Foundation's Child Safety Matters

Evidence Based: Yes

Cost: None

Contact for More Information: Maggie McNally Kimball

(Maggie.McNallyKimball@safeharborcac.com)

For a complete list of Child Advocacy Centers in Tennessee, [click here.](#)



Supplemental Resources

Common Sense Education https://www.commonsense.org/education/
Darkness to Light www.d2l.org
Prevent Child Abuse America https://preventchildabuse.org/what-we-do/child-sexual-abuse-prevention/
Stop It Now! www.stopitnow.org
SOAR https://acf.gov/otip/training-technical-assistance/soar-health-and-wellness
Tennessee Counter-Trafficking Alliance https://www.tncountertraffickingalliance.org
Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) DCS child sexual abuse prevention website: https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/prevention/child-sexual-abuse-prevention.html .
Zero Abuse Project https://www.zeroabuseproject.org/victim-assistance/jwrc/keep-kids-safe/personal-safety/