



A Guide for Educators

PRESENTED BY



Your Truth. Our Purpose.

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Intended use and Audience for This Guide

This Guide, created by the Regina and Area Sexual Assault Centre, was developed for the purpose of sharing the content and delivery approach of RSAC's school presentations with teachers, so they have the opportunity to review what to expect from our presentation ahead of time. It can also be used to inform any parties who may have an interest in what content will be discussed, such as parents, Administrators, and students themselves.

This Guide also provides helpful information and tips for educators to continue the conversation after RSAC leaves the classroom, including how to appropriately speak about violence with children and youth.

Please note: Although this guide uses language that is directed towards educators, and refers to the content covered within our presentations, it is still very much applicable and useful for any person engaged in children's care - such as parents and other service providers.

This Guide will provide information on how to approach these conversations, what children and youth need to know about this topic, and how to respond to children and/or youth with understanding, validation, and compassion.

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT US:


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USE DISCLAIMER

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About KOTB



Kids on the Block (KOTB) is an unforgettable, interactive puppet program that has been educating and empowering children since 1987. Regina and Area Sexual Assault Centre has been offering the program since 2016, reaching 2,000 to 5,000 children in each year the program has been offered. Employing puppetry, KOTB addresses the sensitive topics of abuse and personal safety in a way that is child-friendly and fun, as well as fact-based and educational.

In the puppet shows, the characters share their personal stories and use role-play to illustrate sensitive issues and teach practical skills that can help children enhance personal protective factors. KOTB teaches children how to identify unsafe and abusive situations and how to identify helping adults to whom they can report. Presentations are delivered in a child-friendly and age-appropriate way and is designed to accommodate all learning styles. Extensively researched support materials are provided to enhance learning and to support educators and school staff in monitoring for indicators of abuse and neglect, so they are prepared to support children following presentations, and aware of their Duty to Report.

Kids on the Block also seeks to prevent further incidences of abuse by create a culture where students can express feelings, empathy, and awareness together.



What's included in a KOTB visit?

- A live puppet performance
- Interactive discussion with students
- Comprehensive Teacher's Guide and resources
- A small giveaway prize for students
- Opportunity for follow up visits from KOTB

Why does this matter for educators?



Throughout an average career in education, all teachers will come into contact with students who are experiencing some form of abuse, neglect, or who may be witnessing interpersonal violence in their homes.

Research tells us that children who have experienced adverse experiences like abuse are not only more likely to have issues in school, but they are also more likely to experience long-term impacts related to mental health, substance use disorder, and difficulty with other relationships.

For some children, their teacher or school counsellor may be the only professional or trusted adult they have regular contact with.

Child abuse and sexualized violence is difficult to talk about and most people avoid discussing it. This creates a climate of secrecy, which is an ideal environment for those who abuse children, as they rely on the fear and silence of victims and adults to harm children. One study suggests that a sexual abuser assaults an average of 68 children before being arrested.

With the KOTB puppets, children can learn how to identify child abuse and how to get help. Children learn that child abuse is not their fault, and that adults who abuse children need to get help and support to stop. By listening to a puppet “kid” share personal experiences, children learn and ask questions in a safe environment. Children can learn they should not feel shame in having experienced abuse and that healing is possible. The show also helps children feel more comfortable having those difficult conversations and speaking up and seeking help.

The Facts

- Globally, 1 in 2 children aged 2-17 years suffer some form of violence each year
- Children who experienced any form of violence in childhood have a 13% greater likelihood of not graduating from high school
- Over 85% of child sexual offenders are people the children know and trust, not a stranger
- According to a 2016 Statistics Canada report, among female victims of sexual offences, 52% were under the age of 17
- In Canada, 6 in 10 children reported experiencing child maltreatment before their 15th birthday

Planning for your classroom's KOTB Performance

BEFORE

- You can help prepare your students for the performance by explaining to them that they are about to see a puppet show that will teach them important information about protecting themselves and keeping safe. Let them know they will have a chance to ask questions.
- Encourage students to be active listeners by:
 - Watching for cues of what's important
 - Not paying attention to distractions around them
 - Participating by asking and answering questions
 - Use body language to show they are listening
- You can also help by reminding your students that the puppet show is happening LIVE, not like TV or a movie, so it's important to listen, and wait until after the presentation to ask questions and chat.

DURING

- We encourage teachers to follow along with the show. You are welcome to ask questions or mention things that will increase relevancy for your particular classroom. During the "jeopardy game" performance, the teacher will be asked to be a 'contestant' and to follow along with a very simple script.
- Teachers are responsible for doing their best to ensure students are being relatively attentive and quiet. Of course, kids are kids, and the show relies on some interaction, so we expect laughing, shouting and handclapping at appropriate times.
- Watch for students who seem uncomfortable or react strongly to the presentation. For children for whom the content seems upsetting, having a safety plan after the performance, such as a check in, or referral to the school counsellor, is important.
- Disclosures: Due to the interactive nature of the show, children may try to disclose incidences of abuse, sometimes inadvertently. The format of Kids on the Block helps to prevent this from happening during the presentation. However, if a disclosure occurs, the facilitator will validate the child and their feelings and suggest there are some safe adults they can talk to.

AFTER

- Allow time for discussion. Ask the students what they learned and how they feel.
- Continue to talk about safety themes in your classroom. Research shows this greatly increases the likelihood of the child using these tools when feeling unsafe. We've provided some questions, activities and reminders to help do this.
- Be sure to follow up with any students who raised concerns or seemed uncomfortable. If you don't feel comfortable talking to the student, please utilize school counsellors or contact us for other resources and support.
- Should there be a disclosure during the performance, we can support educators to direct the child to the appropriate resource for follow up.
- If needed, follow up visits can be arranged with us.
- We love letters and drawings from students. Encourage your students to write a letter to the Performance host or puppets and share their experiences with us.

Show Summaries

Kindergarten - Grade 2

Staying Safe

Starring Bloomfield & Claire

Students learn basic safety, including identifying safe places and people, listening to our feelings, and recognizing unsafe situations. This is a light-hearted presentation that focuses on the key motifs of safety.

Staying Out of Jeopardy

Starring Bloomfield & Teacher

Students get to be the audience and active participants in a game show where it's Bloomfield the Bird versus their Teacher in a question and answer style game-show about staying safe, reinforcing the themes learned in the Staying Safe performance beforehand. This performance is more interactive and following the 'game', kids receive a small prize.



Grade 3 - Grade 5

Open House

Starring Stephen and Nam

Students are introduced to the concept of child abuse. They will learn what child abuse looks like, that abuse is never the child's fault, and that families and children can get help. In this performance, students meet Nam, a curious character, and his friend, Stephen, who shares his experience of abuse, and how he and his family found help.

Hotline

Starring Stephen and Nam

Students learn the difference between abuse and normal discipline, using their instincts, and identifying safe and unsafe situations. After learning about child abuse, Nam needs some help in identifying it, and knowing the right thing to do. This performance is a bit more light-hearted but allows lots of room for exploration on learning what child abuse is and how to get help.

Post-Presentation:

A guide to talking to students after "Staying Safe" and "Staying Out of Jeopardy"



Key Concepts

- Stranger awareness
- Recognizing safe people we know
- Identifying 'safe places' in your neighborhood and community



Stranger: A stranger is any person you don't know. A stranger is someone that your parents don't know. A stranger can be a man or a woman, tall or short, young or old, bad or good. Not all strangers are bad, and often, strangers are actually good people – but because we don't know them, we can't know if they are good or bad. There is no way to tell if a stranger is a bad or good person just by looking at them. And sometimes, a stranger may be familiar to you – you may have seen a person before, but unless it is someone that you and your trusted caregivers know well, that person is still a stranger.

An Unsafe Person: An unsafe person may be someone the child or their caregivers know – such as a neighbor, acquaintance, or even family member who says or does things to a child that are uncomfortable, unsafe or illegal. Examples would be showering a "special" child with gifts, asking them to keep secrets, touching/asking them to touch in sexual ways. We know that 85% of those who abused a child were known to the child or family. This is why it is important to help kids trust their gut feelings about unsafe situations, and have open communication about what defines a safe place or safe person.

It is nearly impossible to anticipate every potential unsafe scenario. The best protection is prevention, by eliminating or reducing any opportunity for a person to harm the child. Like practicing fire drills, the purpose of educating children is not to scare them, but to prepare them and help them learn to trust their intuition and feel confident that they will know what to do. Encouraging children to cultivate and trust their instincts can help them recognize potentially dangerous situations.



Tips from the experts

- **Safe Strangers:** Experts suggest that in order to safely get away from a potentially dangerous stranger, children may need to engage the help of another stranger. 'Safe' strangers can include women with children, grandmothers, police officers, security guards, or clerks/employees in a store or business nearby.
- If grabbed by a stranger, children should yell, scream 'This is not my mommy or daddy' or 'Help, Stranger' so people around them do not mistake their calls for help as a tantrum.
- It's a good idea for a child and their caregiver to establish 'designated safe spaces' in their neighborhood. If a child is unable to get to one of their designated safe spaces, and they need to find safety quickly, they should run towards a group of people or a crowd.
- If a stranger is approaching a child in a car, the child should try to run in the opposite direction that the car is travelling if possible.

Parents and caregivers can help protect their children by monitoring children's activities, developing a family safety plan, and fostering open communication to ensure children feel safe to tell their caregivers anything without fear of upsetting them.

What is an unsafe or dangerous situation?



IF A STRANGER...

- Asks for directions
- Tries to touch or grab you
- Asks if you want to see something cute or neat
- Seems to be following or watching you
- Asks you to go somewhere with them
- Asks you to help them with something, like finding a lost item

IF ANYONE...

- Shows you, or asks you to show them private body parts
- Asks you to help them find something, like a lost dog
- Offers you gifts, money, or candy
- Offers you a ride
- Asks you to go somewhere with them
- Makes you feel uncomfortable or nervous

... FIND A SAFE PLACE AND TELL AN ADULT

COMMON 'TRICKS'

- 'Help Trick': Kids like to be helpful. Strangers can take advantage of this by pretending to need help. But, safe strangers know that if they need help or directions, they should ask an adult, not a child.
- 'Emergency Trick': A stranger may say that something bad has happened and the child must go with them right away. This is a trick that can make a child feel upset and makes it hard to think clearly about what to do. If a stranger asks a child to come with them for any reason, the child should find a safe adult.
- 'Bribe Trick': A stranger may offer gifts, candy, or something else a child would like. This is a trick to get a child closer to them. If the child is close enough to take a gift, they are close enough to grab. Never accept things from a stranger without a caregiver's permission.
- 'Animal Trick': Like the bribe trick, strangers may use a pet to get a child to come close. It can be easy to forget the safety rules when you see a cute animal, but children should be reminded not to get near strangers who are asking them to come close.
- 'Whisper Trick': A stranger may speak softly or in a whisper. The child, attempting to hear them, instinctively draws closer. Children should be reminded to keep their distance from strangers who ask them or get them to come closer.

Post-Presentation:

A guide to talking to students after “Open House” and “Hotline”



Key Concepts

- Defining Child Abuse
- Identifying different types of abuse and neglect
- Understanding the different between abuse and discipline
- The important of telling someone

Talking to Kids about Abuse:

In these two performances, we meet Stephen, a child who has some scars on his body, the result of experiencing physical abuse from his mother. Stephen told a teacher, and then was able to get help for him and his whole family. Even though he was scared to tell, he is now glad he got help. We also meet Nam, a friend of Stephen's, who sometimes get confused about what child abuse is, and asks Stephen questions to help him learn. Nam's silly personality adds some comic relief to a difficult topic.

Talking to children about abuse can be uncomfortable, and it's a distressing topic. It's important to let kids know it's normal to feel uncomfortable, but it's necessary to ensure all kids are healthy and safe. Work through tough feelings together!

It's especially important for children to see that the safe adults around them aren't afraid to talk about the topic – if they see shame and unease in adults, they may believe child abuse is something to be ashamed of, or to keep a secret so as to not upset others. When children see adults speaking honestly about child abuse, they will feel more encouraged to speak openly and honestly. If you have personal or family history of abuse or neglect, be aware of your own reactions and bring in another trusted adult if it is too difficult to remain calm and neutral.

When discussing child abuse in the classroom, be mindful of how you're presenting, and do your best to be calm. Answer questions students have to the best of your ability, and be mindful of a child who may ask very specific questions, or a stream of questions – this may be leading up to a disclosure. Often, before a disclosure, children will 'test the waters' by asking specific questions and disclosing small things over a period of time.

It is very rare for children to lie about experiencing abuse. Most children simply do not have the knowledge or language to tell about abuse without having experienced it or watched it happen.

WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

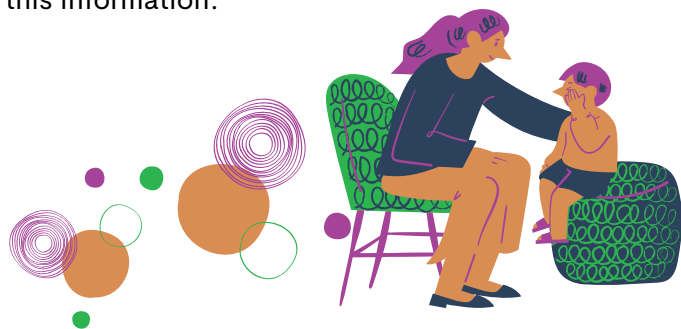
- Children should be taught about abuse the same way they are taught about traffic or fire safety
- They should know the proper names for body parts, including genitals
- They should know their bodies are their own – and that they have the right to say NO if someone tries to touch them in a way that is confusing or uncomfortable
- While it's important for kids to know about strangers, avoid focusing on 'stranger danger' – most children are abused by someone they know and trust
- Children should know they can talk to a trusted adult if someone has or tried to abuse them or made them uncomfortable
- They should know that they and their safety matters and if one adult doesn't believe them, they should keep telling
- They should be taught about 'good secrets' to keep, like a surprise party, and 'bad secrets' like abuse, and that secrets about abuse, touching, or things that make them feel uncomfortable should never be kept
- They should know abuse is never their fault
- They should know that some adults may become upset or even get angry at them for telling, but that means they need to find another adult to tell.

When a Child Comes Forward to Talk About Abuse: A Guide for Educators and Professionals

For some children, a teacher or school counsellor may be the only professional adult that an abused child comes into contact with on a regular basis. Therefore, teachers can be the most important link in a child's journey to seek help.

Here are some tips to support you if you receive a disclosure or suspect a disclosure may come:

- **Talk in Private** – limit distractions and give the child your full attention
- **Explain Your Role** – tell the child you will help them. Explain that in order to help them, you will have to tell someone else. Do not promise to keep a secret or promise that everything will be okay or you can personally keep them safe – these are things outside of our control and promises can erode trust.
- **Stay Calm** – No matter how strong your emotions are, do your best not to display them to the child. Sometimes, a visibly upset adult can make a child feel like they made a mistake in telling or are in trouble. Being calm helps foster safety. It's okay if hearing a disclosure is triggering for you. Be sure to get support following the conversation to take care of your mental wellness.
- **Listen** – Be patient and allow the child to tell their story in their own words. *It is not your job to prove or verify abuse.* Do not pry for details, and do not ask questions outside of what is necessary to report. It's very important not to ask 'leading' questions or encourage the child to tell you a specific answer.
- **Commend** – Let the child know that they did the right thing by telling you. Let them know they were brave to tell, and that what happened is not their fault.
- **Believe** – Research shows that children who experience abuse, especially sexual abuse, have a better chance of making a healthy recovery if they are believed and supported at the time of the original disclosure – your support is the most important thing you can give this child.
- **Record the Information** – in the child's own words. Take notes and try to capture what the child said as accurately as possible – use the same words for body parts that the child used (example: If they said 'privates', use this word)
- **Report** – To the appropriate agencies, under your legal duty to report. It is their job to investigate, provide protection for the child, and support their family. When you call, have ready the child's full name, address, and family information. If you're unsure about what happened, always err on the side of the child's safety and report any suspicion.
- **Respect the Child's Privacy** – This information is sensitive, so be judicious and use discretion when discussing it. Nobody, outside of a school principal, school counsellor, or child protection worker, should be privy to this information.



Duty to Report



You can make a difference
in the life of a child



What is child abuse?

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
- Physical Neglect
- Emotional Maltreatment
- Exposure to Domestic or Interpersonal Violence
- Failure to provide essential medical treatment

Duty to Report

Anyone having reasonable suspicion that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been, or may be, impacted by abuse or neglect has a legal duty to report such information immediately to a local Ministry of Social Services Child Protection Office, First Nations Child and Family Services Agency or police.

What to Report

Your report should include:

- Your name, telephone number and relationship to the child (This information remains confidential, and may be provided anonymously; unless your testimony is required in a court proceeding);
- Your immediate concerns about the child's safety;
- The child's location;
- The child's name;
- The child's age and gender;
- Information about the situation including your observations or, disclosures made to you;
- Information about the family, caregivers and alleged abuser;
- Other children who may be at risk because of the situation; and
- Any other relevant information.

Even if you are unable to provide all of the information, it is important that you provide what you can and report the suspected abuse or neglect immediately to the police or a child protection worker.

It is not up to you to investigate your suspicions to determine if the abuse or neglect has occurred.

What Happens Next?

After the report is made, a child protection worker and/or police will decide what steps to take to assess and respond to the allegations.

Other professionals play a critical role in assisting with the investigation, supporting the child during and after the investigation, and providing follow up services.

Even if you believe someone else is reporting the situation, you still have a duty to report.

The Duty to Report overrides professional confidentiality codes when there is reason to believe that a child may be abused or neglected.

Failure to report or reluctance to share appropriate information can contribute to continued abuse and even death of a child.

Failure to report child abuse or neglect may result in professional or legal consequences. There are no legal consequences for a report made in good faith.

If a child discloses abuse to you, do not ask leading questions or insert information. The circumstances must be conveyed in the child's own words.

For more information please refer to the Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol 2017:

<http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/17/18812-Saskatchewan-Child-Abuse-Protocol.pdf>

Who do you call?

Ministry of Social Services Child Protection Lines:

Regina (South) 1-844-787-3760

Prince Albert (North) 1-866-719-6164

Saskatoon (Centre) 1-800-274-8297

Your local First Nations Child and Family Services Agency.
Your local Police.