

# 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION



*PCA Iowa requests the Iowa legislature to enact a sexual abuse prevention policy for Iowa's children.*

Sexual abuse prevention in Iowa schools builds protective factors for Iowa children, creating safer learning environments and better student achievement for all children.

Safety from sexual abuse and exploitation begins by equipping adults working in a school system with knowledge and processes to recognize and respond to boundary violating behaviors, providing training on appropriate interventions, and developing internal school systems of reporting.

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa requests the Iowa legislature to enacting legislation requiring schools to provide training and supports for awareness and prevention of child sexual abuse and sexual assault in schools.

## **Recognizing and reporting**

- Most teachers don't receive training in preventing, recognizing, or responding to child sexual abuse, either in their college coursework, or as part of their professional development.
- 87% of teachers say they would not report sexual abuse, even if a child disclosed to them, while only 11% of teachers said they would not report a case of suspected physical abuse or neglect.
- The most common reasons for not reporting suspected child sexual abuse was their lack of confidence in their ability to identify it, and to respond appropriately to suspicions.
- More than 80% of child molesters identified in schools or youth-serving organizations have no prior criminal records, according to national risk management experts.

**2 OUT OF 3 TEACHERS  
ARE NOT TRAINED TO**



**PREVENT, RECOGNIZE, OR RESPOND  
TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

## **Disclosure**

- 60% of children sexually abused never report the abuse.
- In the year following training, educators in Texas increased their reports of child sexual abuse to authorities by 283%.

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## Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Iowa

- One in ten adults in Iowa report being sexually abused as a child.
- Four in ten Iowans diagnosed with HIV report being sexually abused as a child.
- According to the National Department of Education, one in ten K-12 students will suffer sexual misconduct from school personnel, coaches, or volunteers. This translates to 54,500 Iowa students enrolled in public or non-public education (not including home-schooled students).
- Children with special needs are at higher risk of sexual abuse.

## Sexual abuse and exploitation impacts student learning outcomes

Childhood trauma impacts student learning. In a study of sexually abused children, cognitive ability, memory scores, and academic achievement, were lower than their peers.

- 48% reported below average grades
- 24% repeated a grade
- 15% were enrolled in remedial classes
- A higher percentage failed to graduate compared to their non-abused peers

## The cost of sexual abuse of students in school

- Insurance claims of sexual assault by school employees or volunteers have increased more than 250% in the last 3 years from \$270,000 to over \$2 million, totaling more than \$4 million in claim payments.
- Sexual abuse of students by school teachers, staff and volunteers negatively impacts school reputation, and creates an unsafe learning environment for students.
- Sexual abuse affects the mental health and wellbeing of students and can lead to substance abuse, depression, and suicidal intentions.

**Prevent Child Abuse Iowa strengthens families for Iowa's future. We believe healthy, vibrant communities provide nurturing environments for kids. Prevent Child Abuse Iowa's statewide network provides expertise in child abuse prevention to create a stronger, healthier Iowa.**



<sup>1</sup>Iowa ACEs data published June, 2016, Central Iowa ACEs 360, Prevent Child Abuse Iowa

<sup>2</sup>The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse Training for Educators on Reporting and Victim Outcomes: The Texas Educator Initiative, January, 2016, Catherine Townsend