




**POMS**

**Best Practices for Creating Policies Around Employee Misconduct Related to Child Abuse**

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**UPCOMING WEBINAR**




**Everyday Ergonomics – The Industrial Athlete**  
 Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 11-am-Noon MDT/10am-11am PDT

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**AGENDA**

- Defining Child Sexual Abuse
- The Scope of the Problem
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Sexual Abuse Predators
- Must Have Policies
- Making the Commitment

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**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

- For this presentation, child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual act between an adult and a minor – intent to receive some type of sexual gratification.

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**THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**

- Boy Scouts of America
  - \$2.46 billion settlement of decades of sex abuse claims.
- LA County
  - May have to spend as much as \$3 billion resolving claims of sexual abuse at its facilities.
- Catholic church
  - Catholic dioceses in the United States have paid more than \$3 billion in sexual abuse settlements.
- Olympics and FBI
  - Women sexually assaulted by Larry Nassar (\$380 million) are seeking more than \$1 billion from the FBI for failing to stop the sports doctor when the agency first received allegations against him.

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**HOW LARGE IS THE PROBLEM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE U.S.?**



1 in 4 Girls




1 in 6 Boys

**Will be sexually assaulted before age 18 by someone they know and trust.**

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**THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**



1 in 10 K-12 students is a victim of educator sexual abuse.

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**THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**

- Only 33% of victims disclose as children.
- One third of victims never disclose.
- 86% of victims never inform authorities.

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**THE CHALK WALL – BARRIERS TO REPORTING**

- Less than 24% of school employees will report child abuse to authorities under mandatory reporting.
- Less than 11% will report child abuse by a colleague.

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**SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

- If 1-in-4 and 1-in-6 figures of sexual assault victims are correct...
  - We have a handful of employees who have been abused.
  - With that background wouldn't they be more likely to report????

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**COGNITIVE DISSONANCE**

- The inability for someone to believe something outside of their current view could be happening – often occurs when school personnel witness colleagues perpetrating sexual abuse or misconduct. (GAO Report 2004)
- Put simply, conflict between what people want to believe and the reality that threatens that belief.
- “They set off alarms that spur the mind to alter some beliefs to make the perceived reality fit with ones preferred views.” (Dr. Kathleen Vohs)

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## COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

- There are two other factors that influence the magnitude of cognitive dissonance (Linda, Cooper, & Jones, 1967, Cooper & Worchel, 1970):
  - Whether you had some choice over the inconsistency and whether you expect the inconsistency to have negative consequences in the future.
  - The more choice you had over the inconsistency and the worse the consequences, the stronger the dissonance will be.

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## SEXUAL ABUSE PREDATORS

*“Any child can be groomed by any reasonably nice adult with interpersonal skills.”*

*“Child Predators are masters at building relationships.”*

*“They are master manipulators – favored by parents, staff, and community.”*

\*Child Molesters: A Behavioral Analysis for Professionals Investigating the Sexual Exploitation of Children

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## SEXUAL ABUSE PREDATORS

- Abusers can be very manipulative, not just to their victims, but also to their communities.
- “It is quite common for an abuser to put themselves in a position of power or respect, in order to readily manipulate their community into refusing to believe accusations of abuse.” – Yisroel Picker

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## THE STEPS OF ABUSE

- Targeting
- Testing
- Grooming
- Sexual Misconduct

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## MUST HAVE POLICIES

- Reference and Background checking
- Expected conduct
  - Boundaries – what is not acceptable?
    - Boundaries must be thoughtful
- Reporting Process
- Investigation requirements
  - Who will investigate, and are they qualified?
  - Conflicts of interest.
- Documentation requirements - keeping documents forever
- Restrictions on “Passing the Trash” – no more giving neutral references

**Hint:** Think about assigning a committee responsible for all things related to sexual misconduct, including development of the conduct/boundaries policies.

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## MUST HAVE POLICIES

- Hiring Policies
  - Extensive review of background.
    - Past employers – were there any allegations of misconduct?
    - Past criminal background – including arrests, not resulting in conviction, FBI fingerprint check, local LEA.
      - More than once?
    - Web search – Goggle, newspapers, online news feed, etc.
    - Criminal offender lists.

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## MUST HAVE POLICIES

- Reference checks
  - Must have a waiver that gives permission to ask critical questions.

### Hints:

- **ASK THE HARD QUESTIONS!!!!**
  - **FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCT!**
- If someone is not answering, why? If someone is not asking, why?**

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## WHO NEEDS TO BE CHECKED?

- **EVERYONE with unsupervised access to children.**

### HINT:

**Predators look for positions where they have freedom to target, test, and groom without oversight.**

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## TRAINING

- Must include:
  - A review of the reporting requirements.
  - An understanding of misconduct and your behavior policies.
  - An understanding and recognition of "victim blaming".
- Hints:
  - Check back on a regular basis for understanding of the policy. Have open conversations.
  - Remove as much cognitive dissonance as possible.
- The more eyes the better
  - Predators do not want to be caught.
  - If they know they are being watched, they will move on.

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## FINALLY, A COMMITMENT

- Vow to be alert.
- Vow to take immediate action.
- Vow to take all complaints seriously.
  - Understand that a child who makes an allegations does not usually do it lightly. The consequences of reporting are intense.
- Vow to not "Pass the Trash".
- Vow to keep a record of everything and to report honestly to anyone asking.

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## THANK YOU! ANY QUESTIONS?




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