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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. We are dedicating this issue to helping you prepare for [National Child Abuse Prevention month](#). Child sexual abuse is far more prevalent than most people realize. According to [Darkness to Light](#) child sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face with the most serious array of consequences. About one in ten (1:10) children will be sexually abused before they turn 18. That breaks down to about one in seven (1:7) girls and one in twenty-five (1:25) boys. People who sexually abuse children can be found in families, schools, churches, recreation centers, youth sports leagues, and any other place children gather. But, child abuse is far more than just sexual abuse. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) in 2012, U.S. state and local child protective services (CPS) received an estimated 3.4 million referrals of children being abused or neglected. Of the child victims, 78% were victims of neglect; 18% of physical abuse; 9% of sexual abuse; and 11% were victims of other types of maltreatment, including emotional and threatened abuse, parent's drug/alcohol abuse, or lack of supervision. Prevention is our greatest ally in protecting our children. Dedicate April 2017 to learning the facts, and enhancing your efforts to train and educate staff as well as your children, parents and community on how to recognize child abuse and how to report it appropriately. More information about child abuse and maltreatment can be found [HERE](#) and is available on the [Online Resource Library](#).

Do you have a board approved Youth Protection Policy? One of the single most important actions your organization can do to help prevent child abuse is to have a [Youth Protection Policy](#) in place that has been adopted by the Board of Directors. The policy will outline the practices your organization will implement to protect youth. This policy should be readily available and regularly communicated to staff, youth, parents and the community. This policy at a minimum should include the following points. All staff, employed and volunteer, are rigorously screened before working to ensure they are suited for working in a youth serving organization regardless of position. Staff are trained to identify and prevent child abuse as well as report any suspected abuse. Staff training includes information on the prevention of bullying and proper internet behavior. The organization follows a practice of supervising all programs with at least two staff members present at all times. Youth are never alone with staff where they cannot be viewed by other staff. Youth are never left unsupervised. Parents are welcome to visit programs at any time. Staff has agreed to not interact (one-on-one) with youth outside of the organization; this includes [babysitting](#), transportation and phone, electronic or internet communication. Staff follows the organization's [Code of Conduct](#). Staff responds to children with respect and treats all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, economic status, or disability. Click [HERE](#) for a sample Youth Protection Policy.

Child Watch / Drop-in Childcare. Many organizations provide Child Watch or Drop-in Childcare as a benefit of membership or add-on service to their members and participants. All too often, these programs do not adhere to the same policies and procedures as licensed childcare programs located in the same building. Child Watch / Drop-in Childcare programs should adhere to the same policies and procedures as a licensed child care program especially as it relates to supervision, staff to child ratios, bathroom supervision, and training. Click [HERE](#) to visit our Blog for additional thoughts or comments on this topic.

Are you screening All your volunteers? Do you [screen](#) **all** your volunteers, both program and policy, in the same manner you screen your employed staff? This is an often overlooked but very important [youth protection program](#) policy all youth serving organizations should follow with vigilance. Why you may ask? While it may seem obvious that program volunteers should be screened in the same manner you screen your employed staff due of their proximity and access to youth, many youth organization fail to screen policy volunteers due to either a perceived low risk or fear of enforcement and pushback. Whether we want to admit it or not, policy volunteers or Board Members are often perceived by front line staff as “above the law” and may be granted access to both the building and program areas or be given privileges others would not. **All** volunteers, program and policy, should complete an application, receive a [background check](#) and an interview including the review and signing of the organizations [youth protection code of conduct](#), and provide a minimum of three (3) [references](#) verified in writing by the organization. The screening process is a critical component of a [comprehensive youth protection program](#) for organizations. This program should include a written (Board adopted) [youth protection policy](#), thorough screening practices, training, supervision and communication.

Safe Place Implementation Training. National [Safe Place](#) Network is hosting a [Safe Place Implementation Training](#) on April 18-19, 2017, in Louisville, Kentucky. Safe Place is a national youth outreach and prevention program for young people in need of immediate help and safety. As a community-based program, Safe Place designates businesses and organizations as Safe Place locations, making help readily available to youth in communities across the country. This training is designed for agencies that are preparing to start Safe Place and recommended for existing licensed agencies with new staff responsible for the program. Click [HERE](#) for more information on how to start a Safe Place program.

Did you see this in the last E-news:

33rd International Symposium on Child Abuse; March 27-30, Huntsville, AL. April is National Child Abuse Prevention month and what better way to prepare. This symposium offers over 130 workshops and is one of the few conferences that addresses all aspects of child maltreatment. **NEW!** this year, **Youth-Serving Organization Track.** Visit the [NCAC site](#) and register!