

TECH SHEET

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

EMC Insurance Companies®

It is often difficult for organizations to discuss the topic of child sexual abuse because no one wants to believe it could happen within their organization. It's easier to think our employees and volunteers always have children's best interests at heart and would never harm them; however, there are more than 80,000 reports of sexual abuse of minors per year. It can happen anywhere—in any church, school or organization—and it's no longer just the offender facing legal issues. It's increasingly common for organizations to be held liable for negligence in sexual abuse cases if, for instance, proper background checks were not completed during the hiring process.

Besides damaging your organization's reputation, a sexual abuse lawsuit can cause a rift between your members, employees, and the public you serve. You can take steps to reduce the risk of a sexual abuse incident by setting up preemptive measures during your interviewing and hiring process, and by strictly monitoring interactions between adults and children in your organization.

Hiring and Screening Practices

When hiring a new employee or volunteer, there are several steps you should take to help reduce the likelihood of hiring a potential offender. It may seem odd to require volunteers to submit to the same background checks and provide the same information as potential employees, but sex offenders will look for any potential crack to slip through. Treating volunteers like employees can help safeguard your organization and the children you serve. In the application process, require the applicant to provide references. You should contact the references to ask specific questions about job performance. Do not limit yourself to only asking for dates of employment, but also ask if the applicant is eligible for rehire. The references provided by the applicant may be able to suggest additional references you should contact. If

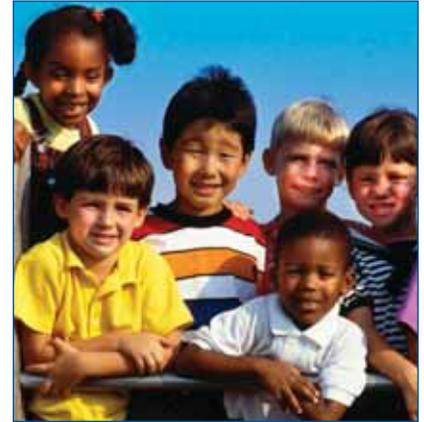
your state allows, research any pending criminal charges.

During the interview process, the interviewer should ask another staff member to provide a second opinion

of the applicant. Ask the applicant about any gaps in employment history. After the first interview, conduct a background check. You should conduct the following searches:

- Social Security Number verification
- National criminal search
- State criminal search
- County criminal search
- Sexual offender search

Once the new employee is hired ask that he or she get fingerprinted. This may seem extreme, but if your recent hire has any criminal charges he or she may back out of the position. It's also good to have fingerprints on file to assist with investigations should any criminal allegations occur.



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Because rules and regulations for background checks may vary by industry and location, be sure to consult your own legal counsel before integrating this tool into your hiring practices.

Guidelines for Interactions

Establish firm written guidelines for interactions between adults and children, including rules for transportation and interaction during and outside of working hours. Create policies that reduce or eliminate one-on-one time between adults and children. Make it harder for potential predators to find the privacy needed to commit abuse by installing windows on interior walls and requiring that all doors remain open during activities. Hold all activities in open areas and have someone on staff to periodically check up on rooms where children and adults are together. Physical contact between adults and children should be kept to a minimum. Make sure all group activities, especially field trips, are supervised by at least two adults.

Training

Require all your employees to receive sexual abuse prevention training. During training, go over your organization's written policy, the definition of sexual abuse and how to recognize and report abuse.

All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report suspicions of child abuse. If you receive an allegation of sexual abuse, take it seriously. Do the following as soon as possible:

- Immediately report the incident to the appropriate authorities. Check with your state's mandatory reporting laws regarding who to contact.
- Notify your EMC insurance agent prior to any internal and/or outside investigation.

- Discuss the situation with the employee and suspend him or her with pay until the investigation is over.

During the investigation, keep both the child's parents and the alleged perpetrator informed of all actions taken. If criminal charges are filed against the alleged perpetrator, communicate this to your staff and members of your organization and consider preparing a statement for the media. If a media statement is necessary, do not release the name of the child or any other identifying information to the media. Be sure to contact your own legal counsel, as well as your EMC insurance agent and/or claim representatives.

For Additional Information

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: <http://aacap.org>

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children: www.apsac.org

Prevent Child Abuse America:
www.preventchildabuse.org

EMC Insurance Companies: www.emcins.com

- Tech Sheets—Background Checks