

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training for Childcare Professionals: An Independent Multi-Site Randomized Controlled Trial of Stewards of Children

Rheingold, A., Zajac, A., Chapman, K., Patton, J., Arellano, E., Saunders, M., & Kilpatrick, M. (2014). Child sexual abuse prevention training for childcare professionals: An independent multi-site randomized controlled trial of stewards of children. *Prevention Science*, 16(3), 374-385. doi:10.1007/s11121-014-0499-6

SUMMARY: Due to high rates of childhood sexual abuse, teachers who are equipped with knowledge on childhood sexual abuse prevention, which includes recognizing warning signs and responding effectively to suspicions of abuse, can help protect children. This study evaluated how the training, Steward of Children, affected childcare professionals' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior related to child sexual abuse prevention, as well as if in-person versus web-based training impacted its effectiveness. Researchers found that the follow-up assessment showed that Steward of Children training was an effective workshop that increased prevention of childhood sexual abuse and there was no significant difference between in-person and web-based training effectiveness.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Stewards of Children training for childcare professionals increased their level of knowledge, attitudes, and preventative behaviors regarding childhood sexual abuse.
- Knowledge and preventative behaviors for childhood sexual abuse were the same between professionals who took training in-person and those who took the web-based version.
- A brief training program, as short as two and a half hour workshop, designed for childcare professionals can impact their child sexual abuse prevention efforts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Facilitate childhood sexual abuse training to help decrease rates of childhood sexual abuse among military children
- Develop web-based childhood sexual abuse trainings for childcare professionals who care for military children

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer adult-focused childhood sexual abuse prevention workshops for military parents and spouses paired with child-focused workshops for their children, due to higher success rates when the programs are paired together
- Disseminate information on child sexual abuse to military parents, educating them on the impact it can have on children and informing them of available resources

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend education of childcare professionals on how to respond to warning signs of childhood sexual abuse
- Encourage collaboration among DoD, community-based organizations, and schools to develop training on resources and services regarding childhood sexual abuse prevention and intervention

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METHODS

- Site coordinators recruited childcare professionals from youth serving organizations among their communities.
- The in-person steward training was a two and a half hour group workshop, the web-based steward training was completed over a two-week period, and the waitlist control group received no training materials.
- Assessments were completed pre-intervention, immediately following the intervention, and three months following intervention. These assessments included the childhood sexual abuse knowledge questionnaire, childhood sexual abuse myth scale, and childhood sexual abuse prevention behaviors.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were between the ages of 18 and 65 years old and a total of 352 professionals were enrolled in the study and 267 professionals completed the study.
- The childcare professionals were recruited from organizations in Bend, OR; Atlanta, GA; and Beaufort, SC.
- Participants were 85% female and were White (65.2%), Black (28.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (.9%), American Indian/Alaskan native (.9%) and other (4.8%).
- Each group had 115 childcare professionals: waitlist control, web-based training, and in-person training.

LIMITATIONS

- Participants were only child care professionals who expressed interest in participating, which could have biased the results of the study because they were more interested in learning how to prevent childhood sexual abuse.
- Participants from the groups who received training and the group who did not receive training worked in the same programs, allowing for potential sharing of learned information gained by the trained professionals with their colleagues in the non-trained group and potentially influencing the scores of those who did not receive training.
- Eighty-five percent of the participants were female, limiting the generalizability of the findings to male childcare professionals.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate if the length of time in the childcare profession impacts outcomes, and whether adjusting training to subgroups based on time in the profession can increase the outcomes of the training
- Recruit more male participants, allowing for greater generalizability
- Explore the success rate of adult-focused training programs when paired with evidence-based child-focused preventative programs

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