Protect Our Children

Mobilizing Oregon Communities for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Next Steps in Curriculum, Design, and Prevention Systems

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University of Oregon College of Education | Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect

Our Children protect

The Ford Family Foundation

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Brief Historical Context

Beginning in 2014 The Ford Family Foundation and The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect formed a Developmental Evaluation partnership designed to evaluate the impact of the Protect Our Children Initiative – including changes that may occur at the individual level, systems level (within and between organizations and within and across community), and observations about the delivery model. The collective impact of this work is detailed in the *Seven Year Impact Cumulative Report* (2023).

The evaluation overwhelmingly found that a) participants value the Protect Our Children training, b) knowledge about child sexual abuse increases, c) pro-prevention attitudes are positively impacted, and d) participants take many more prevention actions relative to randomly selected Oregonians with no Protect Our Children training exposure – and these impacts generally sustain 18-months post Protect Our Children training. Moreover, sites reported positive changes within their organizations, expansion of mission statements to include prevention with broad board-level support, and impact in the community – including, for example, emerging shifts in social taboos around openly discussing child sexual abuse and other forms of trauma.

Protect Our Children also demonstrated the effectiveness of the unique infrastructure/support system developed by The Ford Family Foundation in the service of this ambitious and aspirational initiative. This has included, for example, deep support from The Ford Family Foundation Board of Directors, Mary Ratliff and Keavy Cook's instrumental leadership, a continuous improvement and co-learning training system, the developmental evaluation, and a scalable curriculum.

It can be reasonably assumed that the state of child sexual abuse prevention in Oregon has substantively evolved since 2014 directly due to The Ford Family Foundation's leadership, the Protect Our Children *system of prevention*, and distributed site-level implementation. Taken together, this work has generated a new level of enthusiasm and optimism for child abuse prevention across Oregon, a large body of community members eager to support its growth, new layers of infrastructure that allow for expansion, and evidence that child abuse prevention is effective. This occurs, concurrently, at a time when the prevention field more fully recognizes the value of integrated abuse prevention efforts, as reflected, for example, in the *Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force's 20-year Retrospective Report*. Integrating and aligning abuse prevention initiatives is a promising practice at local, state, and national levels.

Report Purpose and Aims

This report builds on these efforts, draws on lessons learned, and looks ahead to opportunities for new or revised trainings, coordinated implementation, and statewide prevention systems. The report is the result of interviews and focus group conversations with youth and sexual abuse prevention leaders for the purpose of: 1) strengthening and expanding sexual abuse prevention education with Protect Our Children sites, 2) tapping Protect Our Children site staff and affiliates' insights for Protect Our Children next-phase modifications, improvements, and long-term sustainability, 3) informing the development of new Protect Our Children instructional products, and 4) informing a child abuse prevention next-phase rural statewide strategic plan.

The report is the result of interviews at the Protect Our Children Annual Gathering (November 2022), individual interviews, and data sharing and small group conversations at Symposium 1 (February 2023). In total, 96 people were interviewed in 13 individual interviews. Thirty-two organizations across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California were represented, including two organizations in Georgia and South Carolina. Conversations were audio recorded, transcribed, or were documented with field notes/notetaking. All data were reviewed by the Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect research team.

Participants were asked questions that 1) explored best features of the Stewards of Children training, 2) investigated participants' knowledge of additional prevention training materials and curriculum for adults, youth and children, and 3) prompted recommendations for new curriculum and norms change primary prevention education. The full list of interview questions is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1.
Next Steps in Curriculum, Design, and Prevention Systems Interview Questions

Stewards of Children: What We've Learned

- Please describe the best/most useful features of the Stewards of Children training.

What's Out There?

- Please name child sexual abuse prevention curriculum or lessons designed for adults that you think is/are useful or effective.
- Please name child physical abuse prevention, dating violence prevention, and/or identity-based violence in childhood1 curriculum or lessons designed for adults that you think is/are useful or effective.
- Taken together, what about the curriculum/lessons you've named make them particularly useful? What are some of their limits/areas for improvement? What must be done to ensure they are inclusive and accessible?

Designing for/with Adults: Have it Your Way

- If you were to design a new child sexual abuse training for adults, what would you include as its essential content features[2]?

Designing for/with Youth: Have it Your Way 2

- If you were to design a new child sexual abuse training for children/youth (select age(s) of your interest), what would you include as its essential content and features?

Norms: Intersections & 'Through-line'

- If you modified child sexual abuse training content to focus on child physical abuse prevention, child exposure to intimate partner violence/domestic violence, and identity-based violence in childhood what would you keep and what would you change?
- Many people believe that 'norms change' is essential for the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect. Do you agree? If so, which social norms are most useful to influence/change?

1 **Identity-based violence** includes bullying, harassment, and violence due to being a member of a traditionally excluded group. Among the many forms of identity-based violence experienced by Oregon kids, for the purposes of this interview please prioritize the prevention of harm based on race, ethnicity, color, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, religion, ability/disability, and sexual orientation.

2 "Features" includes, for example, length(s) of the training, delivery method (e.g., in-person, asynchronistic), and technology formats.

Stewards of Children – What We've Learned

Participants familiar with Stewards of Children[3] were asked to describe the training's best and most useful features. Their comments centered on three main themes: 1) delivery method and scalability, 2) survivor-centered—fosters empathy and understanding of survivor experience, and 3) raises awareness and inspires practical action-taking.

Delivery Method and Scalability

Many participants praised Stewards of Children for its ease of implementation, describing the curriculum as "turnkey" and "plug and play." Several Protect Our Children partner sites had also delivered the supplemental module trainings in their communities and viewed them as complementary, useful, and relatively brief, giving attendees "hands on steps to take." The "train the trainer" model received positive feedback overall; one participant commented:

"I think the facilitator training they do is really good. I've never been in [a Stewards of Children training] where I didn't leave thinking, "wow, that person did such a great job holding space, responding to questions and comments, and checking in with people." I have been deeply impressed."

Participants frequently discussed the scalability of Stewards of Children and its convenience for large and small groups, especially in communities with minimal access to abuse prevention education. One person reflected the views of many: "The scalability made it very user friendly… [facilitators] can take it and go with it which makes it easier to be able to make sure that it's getting out there." Another participant explained that the curriculum's scalability "allowed for the information to gain footing in other communities that might not have had access to this education."

3 This report is based on observations and impressions of Stewards of Children 2.0.

Several individuals described how the curriculum's model and delivery method enables partner sites and other providers to feel a sense of ownership in child sexual abuse prevention within their communities. One person explained that organizations "can have their own trainer who doesn't have to be an expert in the issue." Others commented that the Stewards of Children curriculum has spurred thinking among organizations about additional ways to engage in abuse prevention, even if it's not a core component of their mission. One person described this growing sense of organizational ownership leading to the development of a prevention learning community: "Organizations and facilitators can host the training without a lot of preparation or training, and [attendees] can feel [involved in] the work and participate in prevention… since it's a shared and facilitated training, people feel like they're part of something larger."

Survivor-Centered—Fosters Empathy and Understanding of Survivor Experience

Another useful feature of Stewards of Children that was commonly discussed was the centering of survivor voices. One participant summed up the perspectives of many: "The survivor stories really connect people emotionally to the topic—I think it's critical." Others stated that while the curriculum's 5-Step Framework to Protecting Children may or may not be memorable after the training, the survivors' personal stories remain accessible in combination with the steps.

Most participants stressed the importance of honoring survivors' experiences while also limiting content that may be emotionally triggering and including content/trigger warnings. One person explained, "It's a delicate balance, to tell that story in a way that's powerful and that people can respond to. But how we get into those stories, I think there needs to be more on the front end about potential triggering."

Raises Awareness and Inspires Practical Action-Taking

Several participants remarked on how Stewards of Children contributes to raised awareness of child sexual abuse and normalizes its prevalence in the community. Many individuals noted that the curriculum focuses largely on how adults should respond once abuse has already occurred, however, and urged an approach that emphasizes primary prevention. One participant commented:

"Stewards helps start conversations and raises awareness in communities [i.e., it does happen here], but there's a lot of focus on the response and recognizing signs of abuse. That's important, but it would be nice to shift the dialogue to be more upstream."

Participants often stated that the curriculum leaves people feeling invested in child sexual abuse prevention in their communities, stirring them to seek more information on the topic and inspiring prevention action-taking. One participant shared a comment that was reflective of several others: "I can see this isn't nebulous… I see what I can do; I see I have a role in it… it empowers people to be active bystanders, to say something." Another person highlighted that the curriculum encourages "accountability of adults taking responsibility to prevent child sexual abuse."

For more information about Stewards of Children's best features and impact in Oregon, please see the Seven Year Impact Cumulative Report and the Ripple Effect Mapping report.

Sexual Abuse Curriculum and Training – What's Out There & Recommended Features

This set of interview questions asked participants to 1) name child sexual abuse prevention curriculum or lessons designed for adults that they believe is effective, 2) name child physical abuse prevention, dating violence prevention, and/or identity-based violence in childhood[4] curriculum or lessons designed for adults that they believe are effective, and 3) to describe what about the curriculum and trainings make them particularly useful, what are their areas for improvement, and what must be done to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.

Several participants noted that they couldn't name specific adult-based curriculum and identified trainings and curriculum designed for adults as "a gap in our systems." Additionally, many participants shared their perspective on the importance of thinking about prevention "beyond a specific curriculum" to an emphasis on desired outcomes, e.g., knowledge and skills such as norms change, ripple effects, and positive action taking that emerge as the result of a concerted system of prevention.

4 **Identity-based violence** includes bullying, harassment, and violence due to being a member of a traditionally excluded group. Among the many forms of identity-based violence experienced by Oregon kids, for the purposes of this interview please prioritize the prevention of harm based on race, ethnicity, color, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, religion, ability/disability, and sexual orientation.

Existing Curriculum Designed for Adults

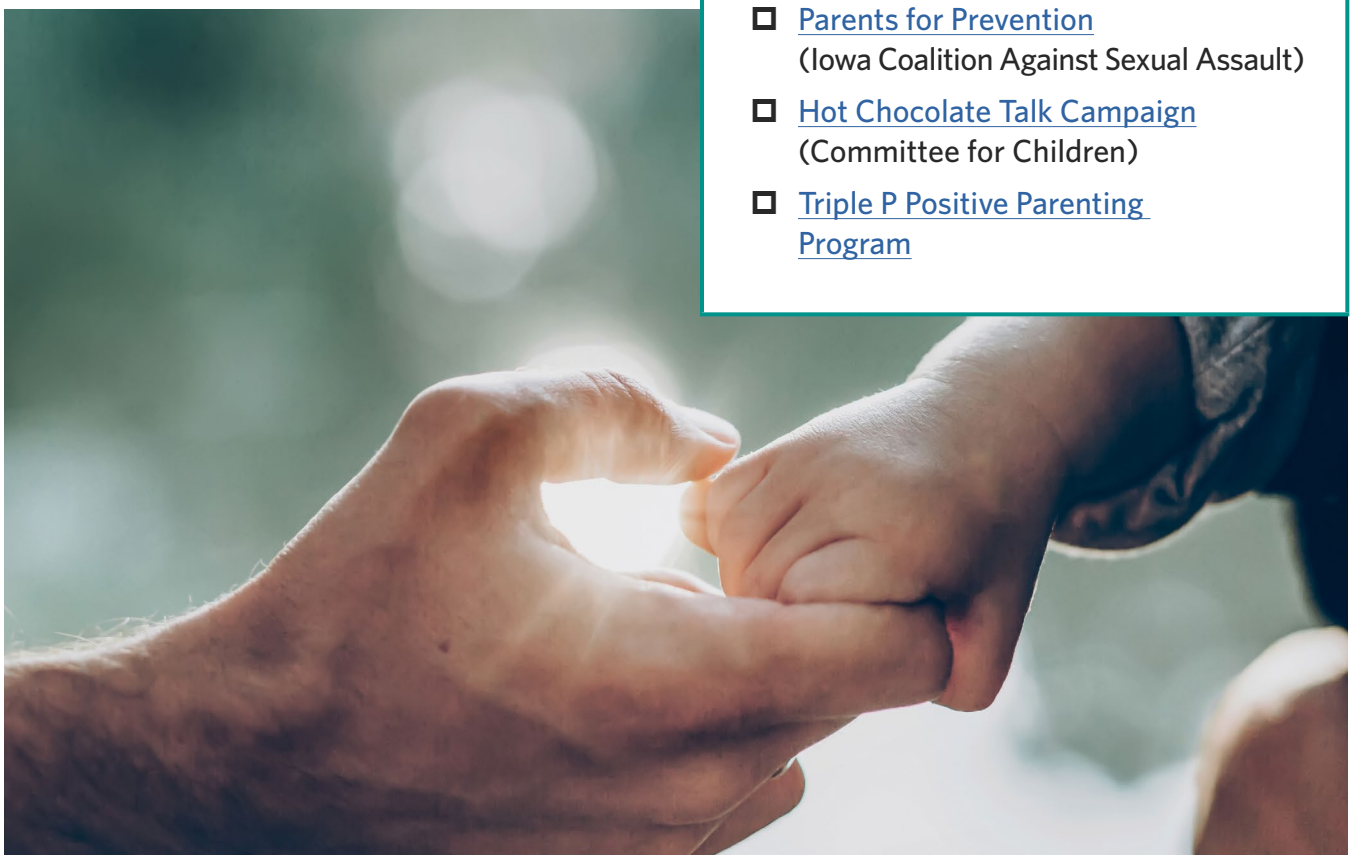
Overall, many participants identified several adult-focused child abuse prevention curricula and trainings. Participants often named well-known curricula, while several participants also urged inclusion of training materials that complement violence-specific prevention. This included trainings that focus on the intersections of violence and: a) trauma informed care, b) racial/ethnic diversity, c) cultural competency/humility, d) gender/sexual diversity, e) modeling consent and social emotional skills to children, f) educator training/professional development, and g) suicide prevention and intervention.

A full list of the violence prevention specific curriculum named by participants as well as other adult focused curriculum identified through an ongoing literature review process is included in Appendix B. Participants most often mentioned these curricula/trainings:

- Circles of Safety (Stop it Now!)
- Enough! (Enough Abuse Campaign)
- Connections Matter (Prevent Child Abuse Iowa)
- HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) (Tufts Medical Center)
- Comprehensive Prevention Training (Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force)
- Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence Trainings (OCADSV)

Participants also mentioned programs specifically developed for parents and caregivers including:

- Strengthening Families (Dr. Karol Kumpfer)
- Parents for Prevention (Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault)
- Hot Chocolate Talk Campaign (Committee for Children)
- Triple P Positive Parenting Program



Key Elements of Child Abuse Prevention Education for Adults: Recommended Features

Participants identified several core preferred features for child abuse prevention curricula and trainings. Key considerations centered around ensuring that the curriculum/training: a) is trauma informed, b) centers equity and anti-oppression, c) targets attitudes, beliefs, and skills, d) grounds curriculum/trainings in theory and research-informed strategies, and e) delivers material in ways that enhance adult learning.

Trauma informed.

Nearly all participants emphasized the importance of trauma-informed curriculum and procedures. This includes centering survivor voices, being strengths-based (e.g., focusing on the power of trusted adults in supporting children rather than only focusing on adults who harm children), and meeting people where they are, i.e., effective curriculum "meets people where they are at but doesn't leave them there" and provides difficult information in a way that is safe and focused on strengths, healing, and taking positive action.

"We must figure out how to walk the line between being factual and being trauma informed. We need to put it (difficult information about child abuse) out there but do it in a way that is not triggering."

Centers equity and anti-oppression.

Many participants also highlighted the importance of curriculum that is centered in equity and anti-oppression. This includes content that a) enhances understanding of the root causes of violence, b) clarifies the difference between individual level and systems level change, and c) normalizes and destigmatizes child abuse. Participants also repeatedly emphasized the importance of ensuring that the voices of youth and marginalized communities are included, instrumental in curriculum design, and materials are culturally and linguistically responsive.

"There is a version of child abuse prevention that is very much a white savior mentality coming from a place of privilege – it's really another form of othering. Centering equity in child abuse prevention...comes from a place of listening and respect."

Targets attitudes, beliefs, and skills.

Participants also urged tailoring the curriculum to effect changes in beliefs and attitudes, pairing information with tangible skills/practice and finding methods for repetition to move away from "one and done" models.

"A comprehensive prevention plan... doesn't have to be super professionalized or super deep but just enough for people to understand... and in many different spaces. It's also important to acknowledge the prevention work that is occurring in our daily lives."

"Everyday prevention that we don't necessarily recognize as prevention."

Additional suggestions included ensuring that curricula:

- addresses barriers to effective response (e.g., bystander effect, power and privilege, skill deficit).
- taps natural/intuitive prevention behaviors and attitudes.
- includes information that can be readily applied within organizations (e.g., churches, childcare centers, community agencies, places of employment.
- connects participants to local resources and agencies.

Theory based and research backed.

Several participants emphasized the importance of utilizing curriculum that is based on theory and evidence based or research informed. Some mentioned theories particularly useful in developing effective curriculum include a theory of change/ social change, the social ecological model, positive and adverse childhood experiences, and addressing established risk and protective factors for child abuse and neglect. Participants also mentioned the need to incorporate data and prevalence statistics, address common myths about child abuse, provide factual and equity-centered information, and well-known risk factors and warning signs of abuse. Many participants expect the curriculum to have data that supports its effectiveness:

"We want to use something that's evidence informed, or evidence based or that utilizes best practices… Having the evidence behind it matters."

Curricular strategies and methods that enhance adult learning.

"Creating spaces where everyone feels safe, acknowledged and heard is key to effective training."

Participants emphasized the importance of creating a training context that fosters learning. These recommendations centered around creating personal connections to the content and warm and connected environments, i.e., "connections on intellectual and emotional levels (create) opportunities to operationalize learning."

Regarding personal connection to training materials, one participant put it this way:

"There [should be] connection between the information presented and real situations… Creating connections between content and real life creates better engagement and interest in the conversation."

Many others pointed to the importance of a) ensuring everyone feels welcomed, b) acknowledging and normalizing trainees' varied subjective experiences with the training, and c) that time for discussion is valued and protected:

"Welcoming everyone and making sure that people are comfortable with their bodies and meeting their physical needs – acknowledge this clearly at the beginning of the training; recognize that people can't be as present or actively learning if they are physically uncomfortable or feel unsafe."

"Having meaningful discussion space for different groups to create their own culturally relevant message, take away, or action item."

Designing Training *for Adults* – Have It Your Way

Participants were asked to describe what they would include if they were to design a new child sexual abuse prevention training for adults. The prompt question was: *If you were to design a new child sexual abuse prevention training for adults, what would you include as its essential content features*[1]*?* Participants emphasized two primary content areas: 1) prevention education foundations, and 2) equity literacy.

Prevention Education Foundations

Prevention education foundations included three subthemes: 1) knowledge, 2) skills, and 3) self-awareness. Regarding knowledge, participants emphasized the importance of understanding ACES and impact, statistics of childhood trauma, and root causes of violence.

Knowledge 1: Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and impact.

One area of foundational knowledge that was highlighted several times were Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Participants believed it was important to share ACE knowledge and the potential long-term impact of dismissive responses to trauma and ripple effects across the life span, including health and quality of life risks associated with surviving abuse (e.g., information on epigenetics and intergenerational trauma). Participants also discussed the importance of normalizing conversations about child sexual abuse – including skills around how to have honest conversations about the culture of silence, how to address the history of harm, and factors that increase the culture of silence, including shame, fear, and stigma.

Knowledge 2: Understanding statistics – scope and nature of the problem of child abuse.

Several participants encouraged the inclusion of data content that covers the prevalence of abuse, its impacts, and statistics about where and to whom it is happening. They suggested that trainings should provide an overview of the underestimation of the extent of child sexual abuse and address the statistics about child sexual abuse for local areas, states, and regions. Furthermore, participants recommend that trainings include statistics about harm caused by oppression and inequity related to race, sexual identity, and related factors.

"It is important to address the statistics about child sexual abuse at local, state, and regional levels, and also the [compounding] harm due to oppression and inequality (race, sexual identity, etc.)."

Knowledge 3: Understanding root causes of violence.

Many participants wanted trainings to include information about root causes of abuse. They described how this involves exploring how systemic issues such as racism and sexism impact the prevalence of child sexual abuse. Additionally, they discussed the importance of educating communities about how providing concrete support to families who are experiencing significant stress can make a difference. This can involve addressing issues such as access to food and affordable housing and other social determinants of health.

Knowledge 4: Expanding perceptions of primary prevention.

Several creative ideas were shared on how to expand ideas about prevention. Participants encouraged training content that draws awareness to actions community members are taking in their daily lives – and to leverage this information to empower and engage people to make additional prevention efforts. This could include modeling healthy relationships, providing comprehensive sex education, engaging men, and discussing oppressive systems.

"Everyone has a role to play... be the part that helps to erase some of the 'we can't do anything about this.'"

Skills 1: Recognizing signs and symptoms.

Nearly all participants emphasized teaching practical skills and prevention action-taking. This included: a) recognizing signs and symptoms, b) building consent and healthy relationships skills, and c) parenting and caregiving.

Participants encouraged embedding violence prevention training skills around a) recognizing warning signs, b) effective response to disclosures, and c) effective implementation of child protection policies. Participants also emphasized skills associated with recognizing common grooming signs, how to support a survivor while disclosing trauma, and strategies for fostering online safety.

Skills 2: Consent and healthy relationships.

Participants also encouraged skill-building related to consent and healthy relationships. This included how to ask for permission from children, verbal consent, and modeling and detailing the characteristics of a healthy friendship. Moreover, participants emphasized that this entails teaching adults how to coach children to respect boundaries, understand consent, open, honest, and healthy communication, how to spot boundary violations, and how to address them. Additionally, participants noted that the training should provide information on healthy sexual education and education around what is considered normal curiosity about bodies for children versus what is a cause for concern.

Skills 3: Parenting and caregiving.

Participants also expressed interest in curriculum that strengthens caregiver skills to reinforce prosocial behaviors and to promote straightforward, medically accurate conversations with young people. They also noted that the trainings should aim to promote healthy sexual development by discussing sex without fear or shame and offering comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education for young people. Another suggestion was to include guidance on how to talk to children about these topics and how to address problematic sexual behaviors in youth.

Participants also highlighted the importance of parents teaching and modeling individual violence prevention skills. One participant shared:

"Not only giving adults skills for talking to youth about violence prevention and health promotion, but also modeling and practicing the skills with the adults so that they can use them themselves, such as mindfulness, social emotional learning, and more."

Practice: Self-reflection.

Many participants urged the importance of practicing self-reflection as a core element of child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. This involves being aware of differential treatment, acknowledging biases and prejudices that may impact how we react to victims/survivors of abuse, and examining our own experiences that may impact our relationships with youth. While most training programs focus on knowledge and skills, participants emphasized self-reflection as necessary for attitudinal change and changes in values and perspectives. Self-reflection, they argued, allows individuals to identify what irritates them, what they don't like, and enables adults to become more aware of how they can be effective prevention advocates. One participant summarized the importance of this in one simple question: "Why do we care sometimes and not other times?"

A Central Role for Equity Literacy in Prevention Education

Participants also frequently described equity-related considerations for adult-targeted child sexual abuse prevention trainings. This included seven themes: a) access and representation, b) gender stereotypes, c) survivors, d) systemic issues, e) trauma-informed, f) language, and g), additional ideas/miscellaneous considerations.

Access and Representation.

Participants described five sub-themes of Access and Representation that they highlighted as important equity-related considerations. These included a) access, b) cultural considerations, and c) LGBTQIA2+ identity considerations, d) disability inclusion, and e) language considerations.

Improving access to training.

Many participants emphasized the importance of making child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults more accessible. This includes addressing the barriers that parents and caregivers face when participating in trainings, making trainings accessible to different work schedules and backgrounds, and accommodating people with a range of cognitive abilities. One participant shared, "The question is what is the barrier; what gets in the way; sometimes it's bias, sometimes it's not knowing what to do" (to improve access and provide accommodations). Another participant highlighted some groups that may have a more difficult time accessing trainings such as "parents of kids who are reliant on adult caregivers because of special needs, foster parents, and other non-parent community members."

To address barriers, participants suggested creating a space where trainees can be fully present during the trainings and not distracted by other priorities. Additionally, participants encouraged finding entry points for traditionally excluded communities to engage with the trainings and making the curriculum adaptable and flexible to meet their needs. The goal, participants emphasized, is to help all community members understand how child sexual abuse prevention affects them personally and impacts all parts of their community. A participant eloquently described it this way:

"If we're really trying to do child abuse prevention, we need a lot of other folks in our community to be successful, connecting, and understanding. If the focus only comes to us and our initiative, we're working against our goal of actual abuse prevention in our communities and in our world."

Cultural Considerations.

Participants discussed the importance of including cultural considerations or adaptations in child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. They emphasized that these considerations go beyond language use and urged incorporation of a variety of cultural practices in raising children and teaching them about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior (e.g., proper touch, consent). Additionally, they highlighted the importance of addressing how different communities and people may engage with the information based on their experience or connection to sexual violence. For example, examples and illustrations in trainings should be culturally relevant and data such as statistics should be representative and acknowledge varying experiences and perspectives.

LGBTQIA2+ Identity Considerations.

Almost all participants emphasized the importance of including LGBTQ+ issues in child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. They highlighted the need to address homophobia, transphobia, and myths about who harms children, as well as being more inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth and diverse gender expressions. Participants also stressed that the trainings need to be comprehensive for LGBTQ+ individuals and more inclusive overall. This could include educating about and normalizing inclusion of pronouns in introductions, and acknowledging how high rates of abuse in traditionally excluded groups affect everyone.

"We have to address homophobia and myths about who harms children, as well as what it does and doesn't mean when someone is sexually abused in terms of their own sexual identity."

Disability Inclusion.

Several participants pointed out that current curricula often lack representation of youth with special needs and are not inclusive of people with disabilities. One challenge noted by participants was that Oregon is one of the states that does not require access to sex education for students with intellectual and physical disabilities, even though these communities experience higher rates of abuse and neglect. Therefore, participants agreed that it is important to improve the training to make it more inclusive and representative of people with disabilities.

Language Considerations.

In addition to cultural considerations, participants made suggestions from the perspective of non-English speakers. They highlighted the need for equitable language and accurate translations that are available in multiple languages. Participants also strongly emphasized that native speakers should be used for video content in non-English languages, rather than dubbing over English language audio.

Gender Stereotypes.

Several participants emphasized the importance of addressing gender stereotypes as an essential part of child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. They noted that the trainings should include critically thinking about what toys and materials depicted in trainings look like and how they may perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. Additionally, participants suggested that trainings should provide specific examples of how to support young children, particularly those under five years old, in understanding gender stereotypes in society. They added that this information is crucial in preventing child sexual abuse as gender stereotypes can contribute to the perpetuation of harmful behaviors and attitudes around gender and sexuality. By addressing gender stereotypes, child sexual abuse prevention trainings can promote healthy and respectful relationships among children and adults.

Survivors.

Participants noted the importance of centering survivor voices in child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. One participant suggested that trainings also include survivors who fall outside of the stereotype for a survivor, such as male survivors and survivors who may not have realized they were victimized as children.

"We need feedback from people with lived experiences within child welfare and other systems and to move away from centering our own voices."

Systemic Issues.

Many participants strongly emphasized the notion that abuse does not exist in a vacuum and that prevention messaging should be tied to other forms of interpersonal violence and systemic injustices. They suggested that trainings address issues such as houselessness, poverty, racism, and others that may compound child sexual abuse prevalence. Participants argued that, by understanding these issues and how they intersect with child sexual abuse prevention, trainings can be more effective in preventing abuse and creating safer environments for children.

"Tying more of our messaging into other forms of interpersonal violence, as well as systemic issues and experiences, such as houselessness, poverty, and more."

Trauma-Informed.

Being trauma-informed is crucial in child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults, and it involves creating a safe and supportive environment for participants to share their experiences. Participants recommended this be achieved by "providing language that allows individuals to define their own experiences and feelings, and by giving them the space to do so." By being trauma-informed, trainers can help participants understand the impact of trauma on survivors, and how to approach individuals who have been harmed with empathy and sensitivity. Participants highlighted that it is important for trainers to recognize the diversity of experiences and different ways individuals may respond to trauma, and to tailor their approach accordingly.

Language change suggestions.

Participants suggested some language changes that can be implemented in child sexual abuse prevention trainings for adults. Instead of using "health promotion and strengths-based," trainers can use "healthy alternatives and focus on how to make relationships stronger." The use of person-first language is also recommended, including for perpetrators. One participant highlighted the importance of "not demonizing and 'othering,' but instead using terms such as 'person who has harmed.'" Additionally, suggestions were made to replace "survivors" with "person with lived experience." This allows individuals to self-identify, and they may choose to include "survivor" as part of their identity.

"[We should] move away from talking about 'survivors' to talking about 'people with lived experience.' People are much larger and bigger than one life experience."

Other/miscellaneous considerations.

A few additional ideas were discussed by several participants. The first idea revolves around intuition. Participants noted that intuition may not be valued or reinforced for everyone due to their identity and experiences and that intuition is best considered as part of a team, rather than relying solely on individual intuition – and, instead, emphasizing community intuition and collective wisdom. The second suggestion from participants is to normalize the fact that everyone causes harm in some way, intentionally or unintentionally, and learning from it is crucial. Finally, the third idea is to address the reality that there are likely people who have been harmed and people who have harmed in the training room.

"It's important to normalize that we all cause harm in some way, maybe in small ways, maybe in large ways, maybe unintentionally. What's important is that we can all learn better when we know better."

Suggestions for Technical Features and Modalities

Participants offered suggestions for more technical features of training for adults. Participants specifically highlighted the importance of adaptability in the curriculum, modality, and teaching approach. These recommendations are highlighted here:

- Structured curriculum with units that are customizable/adaptable and fitting for varied adult learning styles
- No reliance on scare tactics
- Focus on quality of experience over attendance rates
- Utilize strong marketing material; include multiple appeals and outreach efforts
- Offer multiple options for engagement with the training materials
- Utilize video components, check-ins with group discussions, scenarios, and small group activities
- Offer a diversity of modalities and multiple approaches to trainings for different learning styles
- Ensure repetition of essential information to support learning
- Provide opportunities to build connections and trust between participants before the training begins
- Use current statistics and data

Designing Training *for Youth* – Have It Your Way

When given the chance to imagine a new child sexual abuse prevention curriculum that is aimed at youth, participants' recommendations were broad and sometimes contradictory. The prompt was framed very similar to the adult recommendations: If you were to design a new child sexual abuse prevention training for youth, what would you include as its essential content features? Recommendations for this prompt focused on both the potential structure and ideal content that participants would like to see youth learn.

Structure

Recommendations for the structure of such a curriculum focused on three main areas: 1) working with schools, 2) facilitator characteristics, 3) family engagement and support.

Schools

When thinking about Child Abuse Prevention curriculum for youth, participants focused on school-based implementation and the complexities that come with working in public schools. First, many participants spoke about the importance of increasing buy-in for schools, especially of already developed programs like those developed by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). For some participants, this includes providing tools for schools to deal with potential pushback from families or the community. Along with these concerns, participants noted that any curriculum that is intended to be used in schools has to be accessible for schools to implement. Especially for those who work with schools regularly, concerns about teachers' workload were commonly mentioned:

"Teachers are so taxed. There's so much going on for a lot of them . . . [they feel like] 'I have so much to do already.And now I've got to meet this unfunded mandate here, let me stress on time as it is... let me just incorporate this really tough topic."

Participants noted the need to find a balance between what schools are able to implement and what research shows is effective, especially when it comes to length of lesson and dosage.

One other important suggestion to highlight is to do school wide trainings for staff. These trainings would be done to be sure that all staff, not just the teachers, are prepared to properly handle any potential disclosures:

"We tell [children] to tell [an adult], but we don't always also tell adults how to create a safe space for kids."

Many students' most trusted adult at school is someone who would not be facilitating lessons and, therefore, would not be a part of any facilitator training. This suggestion is to be sure that these adults provide responsive support to any youth that may disclose abuse to them after

the lesson. It was also mentioned that these staff should be given adequate support to deal with the emotional toll of hearing such a disclosure.

Facilitator

Many participants noted the importance of strong facilitation for these lessons, and there were several suggestions for characteristics and support for the facilitators:

"If you don't have really solid facilitation, you can actually leave having done more harm and created more barriers and more stigma."

Some suggestions were contradictory, such as having classroom teachers facilitate and having facilitators who are not mandatory reporters. The suggestion to have classroom teachers facilitate was often given as a way to make the program scalable and to use the relationships that teachers already have with their students, rather than attempting to build trust with students from scratch. However, several participants noted that mandatory reporting can make students more hesitant to open up, and a facilitator who is a confidential advocate may allow students to feel more comfortable. All teachers in Oregon (and many other professionals who would likely facilitate such a curriculum) are mandatory reporters, so this suggestion would require an outside facilitator.

Another piece that was suggested repeatedly was having support for the facilitator built into the program in the form of both systemic supports and adequate training. In addition to providing facilitators tools for dealing with pushback, support for facilitators' safety was a concern,

given the political climate. Participants also acknowledged the need for support in dealing with disclosures, both for adequately responding and for dealing with the secondary trauma that can come from repeatedly bearing witness to stories of abuse. Finally, the importance of proper training for facilitators was brought up many times, especially with regards to biases that may impact their facilitation:

There's really no way to ensure what exactly the teacher is going to say, [so we need] to help them avoid bringing their biases into the trainings and really do damage to kids by saying things . . . I would say that it's really important that no matter what training program, [the facilitator training] spends some time talking about not bringing your own biases into the training

Family Engagement and Support

The importance of properly engaging and teaching families as well as children was brought up repeatedly by participants. Participants wanted any curriculum that was given to children to have some sort of support for families. This included suggestions for resources to help families navigate difficult conversations about child abuse with their children:

"[Families] need resources to help them [navigate these topics]. It's our job as the community connectors, to be aware if that's in our region, or if that's in our area. Because if we're saying, "Okay, do this," and they need support [to do it], that's on us to help them understand that. Providing a resource packet is crucial."

In addition to providing access to resources, participants suggested several different ways to "bring it out of the school and bring it back to the parents" when it comes to conversations about child abuse. Participants want families to understand the content of the curriculum so that children and adults are using shared language:

"We need to align what we're teaching kids [with adults, so] that they have some kind of shared language, or [parents are] aware of the language that kids are [learning], so that they can have open communication about those things."

People also spoke about giving families the tools to reinforce the lessons that students are learning at home:

"Majority of the kids in our county get educated every single year [on CSA prevention], but parents don't know the kind of education their kids are receiving, unless they read the letters that we sent home. So [it should be] a curriculum [for kids and adults] that works alongside each other, giving the parents access to what their kids are learning."

"If it's being shared at a school, that there are things that parents can also have [to] keep the conversation going...some shared learning, some additional tools. . . Because kids are not going to ask the question of the teacher in front of their friends. They talk to mom or dad."

Finally, much like with school staff who are not facilitators, some attention was paid to the fact that teachers are not the only people to whom children may disclose abuse. For most children, the adult that they trust most is in their home, so these adults should also be given support and guidance in how to respond to such a disclosure:

"How do you have this conversation with a child if a child discloses? How do you actually go through that process to support that job to empower that child? Because that's a huge step for a child to finally disclose and they see you as a safe adult."

Content

In addition to the suggestions for structure and facilitation, participants had many suggestions for the style and structure of the curriculum and essential content to teach youth about child abuse prevention.

Curriculum Style

Participants had many suggestions for how to make curriculum about child sexual abuse both effective and engaging for youth. Small class sizes was a very common suggestion for both of these purposes. Several participants brought up the importance of lessons being fun and the effectiveness of play-based social-emotional learning, and frustrations that CSA prevention curriculum is typically not designed to engage all different types of learners:

"It's a complaint that I have for all curriculums that we do in schools, and it's not to make light of [the issue], but an engagement or a fun component with kids is educational [helps them to] engage with the material."

Another suggestion to make it engaging is to incorporate lessons about things like healthy conflict resolution and consent into other lessons. One participant even brought up the suggestion of a facilitator meeting with teachers regularly to offer support in infusing prevention messaging into other lessons, rather than facilitating a specific curriculum. Others suggested infusing these lessons as a means of reinforcing the concepts:

"So often [consent lessons occur] in a one off conversation, which doesn't work if it's not followed up on. But it could be if you're starting a game on the playground, you ask [others] if they want to join, you don't just grab someone . . . There's so many ways that those conversations can tie in that aren't specifically about body boundaries."

Unsurprisingly, the importance of any lesson on child sexual abuse being based in trauma informed practices was brought up by many participants. It was sometimes brought up in the context of being sure that we are empowering kids, not frightening them:

"We need a way to talk to kids about this that doesn't make them feel scared. And in a way that doesn't make them [feel] responsible for anything that might happen to them."

Trauma informed practices were also brought up in the context of being inclusive of different cultures and the current, historical, and intergenerational trauma that exists in many marginalize communities related to CSA:

"[It would] certainly be nice to see indigenous populations represented, because the historic trauma that has gone on and continues on there. That's one population that's missed entirely. [Representation for] LGBTQ kids, Indigenous kids, and kids with disabilities has been missed."

One of the most common suggestions for curriculum was that it should have developmentally appropriate lessons from kindergarten through the end of high school and have consistency in language and messages throughout their time in school:

"I think those messages need to be reinforced over and over and over and over throughout the entire education. You know, young people need to hear from from day one to the last day of grade 12."

"We wouldn't teach one lesson on reading and expect kids to be able to read novels. So why are we teaching one lesson about consent in 12th grade and then expecting them to have it all figured out? It's not realistic, and at 12th grade, and they probably have been in situations much younger, where it would have been helpful information, either for them or for a friend."

Essential Content

When it comes to essential content, an important thing to keep in mind is that there are standards set by ODE for the essential content that must be taught to kids in Oregon about violence prevention. Oregon has "such a high standard" compared to other states, so "not a lot of curricula [that currently exist] actually met many of the standards." In addition to the specific content required by the state, many participants brought up skill building as the most essential content in these lessons. People were concerned that it is not effective to only tell kids "what not to do" without building the skills for healthy relationships and boundaries, for all types of relationships:

"I feel like it's so important that we give them the tools to not only protect themselves, but also to be able to navigate the world with empowerment skills."

"We're trying to teach skills and approaches and ways of treating people. We're not just trying to give them some helpful information. That's the bare minimum. Helpful information is one piece of a broader system of cultivating well engaged, compassionate, kind, kids."

Some participants wanted to be sure that youth are adequately prepared to support each other, since so many youth prefer to go to peers for support than to adults.

"They're leaning on each other a lot. I think it's really important that we incorporate solid information so that they feel like they can help a friend."

Participants also brought up the importance of developing cultural understanding and acceptance:

"I think a real emphasis on bullying needs to be included. I think that a lot of the time bullying stems from differing identities. . . And when young people internalize those things, they learn the building blocks of being able to commit violence, because they know that it's reinforced or accepted in their communities. And so, I think bullying prevention work is really crucial in helping people to understand [the difference] between disagreements and actually causing harm that you will be held accountable for."

In initial interviews, there were contradictory opinions on the importance of teaching children to trust their feelings. Some participants felt that it was essential, because "kids, even if they don't know what is happening to them, they sometimes get a feeling" that something is wrong. However, there are concerns that telling children to trust their feelings can be confusing advice if they love and care about the adult that is hurting them, and that teaching kids safety rules is easier for them to understand. When presented with this dilemma for discussion, participants felt that it could be a balance of both, rather than one or the other:

"Teach kids to understand and honor their feelings, but acknowledge that feelings can be very confusing when it is someone [the child] trust[s], [so they] can rely on safety rules if [they're] not sure."

While almost all of the participants brought up the importance of curriculum that makes youth feel empowered, several also wanted to be sure that the curriculum does not put pressure on children to be the ones that prevent child abuse, and that children understand that protecting kids is an adult's responsibility:

"[Preventing child abuse is] not your job as a kid. You have adults around you, teachers, parents, family members, and it's their job to keep you safe. It's not your job to keep you safe. You are a child. It's our job as adults. [We need to] shift that responsibility for violence away from kids, or even individual people, [instead] making it, "This is our community's responsibility."

Another content area that was brought up repeatedly was the importance of upstream prevention. Many curricula that are currently delivered in schools focus on teaching kids how to respond if child abuse happens. Participants in these interviews hope for a curriculum that promotes protective factors and addresses risk factors so the harm does not occur. It was highlighted that these types of prevention activities can address many forms of harm that can come to children, not just CSA:

"I really think in order to be successful, we've got to help kids and adults understand that a lot of these protective factors are the same for lots of different issues."

The other aspect of moving upstream that was mentioned by many participants is using youth focused curricula to prevent perpetration, not just victimization:

"It's really important that if we're going to develop something that's comprehensive, that we focus on perpetration prevention by helping [kids] address others with compassion and understand how their actions impact other people."

"Most of the kids that I've worked with who have perpetrated sexual violence, are not like trying to cause harm. They just don't understand boundaries, consent, why things are not okay . . . And so they're out here experimenting or doing behaviors to try to understand the world [when they] have not been given [the right] information."

Other essential content that was mentioned included boundaries, conflict resolution skills, building self-esteem, and digital or online exploitation prevention.

Norms Change – Intersections and Through-Line Opportunities

Participants were asked to identify social norms that need to change to prevent child sexual abuse. The specific question was: Many people believe that 'norms change" is essential for the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect. Do you agree? If so, which social norms are most useful to influence/change?

Every participant agreed that norms change is essential for primary prevention. Many also highlighted the incremental nature of norms change. While incremental change can feel difficult, as one participant stated, it can also be simple: "It's one person, and if that one person spreads that information to someone else and brings someone else into the conversation… then we've got movement building". The most prominent themes were norms changes that target a) oppression, b) the "culture of silence," and c) sexual education.

Norms and norms change perceptions vary across diverse populations, e.g., persons with varied identities, class, and location have diverse histories, needs, customs and social norms. The themes identified in this report were drawn from a sample comprised largely of Oregon residents and that is predominantly White, cisgender, and middle class. Additional research and exploration on norms change in Oregon requires engaging a more diverse audience toward building a representative violence prevention statewide plan.

Target and Reduce Oppression

Addressing norms that perpetuate oppression was most frequently identified by participants as central to sexual abuse prevention. Participants' comments ranged from the disproportionate impacts of harm for different communities to how social inequality contributes to the root cause of child abuse and neglect. As such, two oppression-related subthemes were identified: inequity as cause and discrimination in response.

Inequity as Cause.

Several participants spoke about the need to address social inequity as a norm which often causes—and perpetuates—cycles of abuse. One participant reflected the views of many in their comment about how systemic inequality impacts the course of child abuse and contributes to its cause:

"[We need to] really look at root causes…like, how is ableism impacting this, how is sexism impacting this, how is racism impacting this? And then [look at the layered] history…that ends up promoting environments for people to cause harm, or to gain power and control, or by taking it from someone else."

"If we're not really getting at these root causes… then [child abuse is] just going to keep sprouting… [like] a dandelion…you can pluck off that head, and it's going to come right back up a week later."

Discrimination in Response.

Several participants noted that discrimination and inequity negatively affect people who are most at risk for child abuse and how these attitudes impact response and response systems. Biased ideas about who is "at risk" and who is credible can negatively impact the support and response children are given. For instance, one participant discussed the differential impact of reporting depending on identity:

"It's twofold if anyone reports, especially if maybe you're a male, if you are in the LGBTQIA+ community, there's a huge backlash against you."

Several others spoke about how ingrained norms of power and privilege impact who gets access to support and the type of responses they receive. One participant said this:

"It's the social norms of differentiation and hierarchy. So, who is credible? Who's worthwhile? Who's deserving? And the challenge is to reveal that [hierarchical thinking], to [be able to] openly discuss that."

Another stated this about how class can impact the response and support individuals receive:

"There's a real connotation around poverty and around 'what does that look like?' and 'who's responsible for it?'. That needs to change…I think that class is an undercurrent - that thing that says you have to earn what you have, and if you don't have as much, then you're less than."

These statements identify how the intersection of class and power hierarchies create an entrenched—and sometimes invisible—way of determining who is responsible for harm. Participants suggested that viewing those with less power and privilege as inherently responsible for their hardships serves to remove responsibility from mutual community and encourages individuals to look away from the harm being perpetuated by inequality.

Attitudes about who might "deserve" to be harmed also surfaced as an important area for norms change among participants. That is, some forms of violence are accepted in communities because some might be perceived to deserve it more than others. One participant described this norm as the idea that "It's okay to hurt people that have it coming, or that there are… people who deserve to be hurt." These attitudes justify and perpetuate a culture of violence and harm.

Target and Reduce Culture of Silence

Several participants discussed silence and shame around child abuse, specifically regarding the difficulty of prevention work when people often do not feel comfortable talking about child abuse, especially sexual abuse. One participant put it this way:

"People don't talk about it, don't feel like they can ask for help, or don't feel like they can bring it up if they suspect it's happening in their family or in their community."

They highlight here the simple reality that if someone feels they cannot talk about abuse, they cannot then ask for help. Another participant discussed their perception of why this culture of silence exists:

"We need to remove the taboo to talk about it. I think because sex is involved, we feel like it's off limits, like we're still in the 1950s where we don't talk about anything untoward. Because that's not appropriate for society. And I think that just has done so much damage in our communities. If we can't talk about it, it's going to continue to live in secrecy."

Target and Promote Healthy Sexual Education

Several participants suggested that normalizing healthy sexual education in schools and communities is instrumental toward child sexual abuse prevention. The absence of this form of universal education was often brought up as a direct result of the culture of silence discussed above, where shame seems to cause hesitancy as well as active pushback from parents and communities. Yet, participants agreed that changing norms around sexual health, relationships, and boundaries is a key upstream prevention strategy. One participant discussed a need to change minds about what this could look like in schools:

"There's a really significant need [to teach] consent, boundaries, healthy relationships... And helping people understand what kids are learning in school, about those social emotional skills. To not only accept the fact that their kid needs this education, but also be able to advocate to other parents about why we need to rally around our schools to provide this kind of education."

Another participant spoke about the importance of not only helping kids understand more about their bodily autonomy but also norms change where community and family members internalize and respect children's rights to self-determination:

"[An important] norms change is just understanding that kids do have autonomy. And I don't mean just body autonomy. I mean...we can have conversations with kids...they are smart enough to have these conversations. They need to [understand autonomy] to navigate their world."

Perceptions about People who Harm and Violence-Affirming Culture

Participants also pointed to norms about how society views "perpetrators" of violence and our violence-affirming cultural/social context. Several participants noted that the language used to label persons who cause harm to children can negatively impact prevention and intervention efforts. One participant stated this:

"I think within society it's so stigmatized..., i.e., "pedophile." But even within that terminology, there's a lot of misunderstanding. [Among pedophiles] there's a small number that actively harm youth. But most people that harm children end up not being technically pedophiles. It's about power, it's about control."

Participants also noted that, more generally, violence and neglect against children can be so normalized in communities – as if it were an inevitable part of being human. This undercuts awareness of its impact, and prevention momentum building. One participant put it this way:

"It's about what do we accept in our communities? What kind of violence and abuse do we allow?

"How do we make sure that people know that those things aren't okay – from the get-go? I would focus on risk of perpetration. And really being honest about the fact that people who perpetrate harm were once children in a home, right? There's real capacity there to change that trajectory."

Summary

This is a draft document. Information gathering is ongoing. A summary report that integrates Symposium I and Symposium II conversations and additional interviews will be provided in summer, 2023.

To offer comments and provide information, please contact Simone Piper at simones@uoregon.edu.

Appendix A

Protect Our Children 2022-2023
Asset Mapping and Visioning Individual and Focus Group Interview Questions

Purpose

To build a proposal for a statewide child abuse prevention strategic plan by drawing on a) knowledge gained during Protect Our Children 2015-2022 and b) insights from individuals with lived and professional expertise across Oregon and in other U.S. and international communities. This includes:

- identifying prevention assets, best practices, and gaps
- tapping insights from Protect Our Children staff and their partners to inform next-phase modifications, improvements, and long-term sustainability
- informing the development of new Protect Our Children instructional materials
- informing next steps for expansion and enhancement of a statewide system of prevention and including modifications for local use
- informing continuous improvement

Question Set 1 – Curriculum

Core questions:

1. Please name child sexual abuse prevention, child physical abuse prevention, dating violence prevention, and/or identity-based violence in childhood[5] curriculum or lessons designed for adults that you think is/are useful or effective.
   - Question 1, part 2. What about the curriculum/lessons you've named make them particularly useful? What are some of their limits/areas for improvement? What must be done to ensure they are inclusive and accessible?
2. If you were to design a new child sexual abuse prevention training for adults, what would you include as its essential content and its essential features[6]? If you modified the training to focus on child physical abuse prevention, what would you keep and what would you change? If you modified it to focus on the prevention of child exposure to intimate partner violence/domestic violence, what would you keep; what would you change?

5 **Identity-based violence** includes bullying, harassment, and violence due to being a member of a traditionally excluded group. Among the many forms of identity-based violence experienced by Oregon kids, for the purposes of this interview please prioritize the prevention of harm based on race, ethnicity, color, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, religion, ability/disability, and sexual orientation.

6 "Features" includes, for example, length(s) of the training, delivery method (e.g., in-person, asynchronistic), and technology formats.

3. Please name child sexual abuse prevention, child physical abuse prevention, dating violence prevention, and/or identity-based violence in childhood curriculum or lessons designed for children and/or youth that you think is/are useful or effective.

   - ☐ Question 2, part 2. What about the curriculum/lessons you've named make them particularly useful? What are some of their limits/areas for improvement? What must be done to ensure they are inclusive and accessible?

4. If you were to design a new child sexual abuse prevention training for children/youth (select age(s) of your interest), what would you include as its essential content and its essential features? If you modified the training to focus on child physical abuse prevention, what would you keep and what would you change? If you modified it to focus on the prevention of child exposure to intimate partner violence/domestic violence, what would you keep; what would you change?

5. Are you familiar with the Stewards of Children training? (If no, skip to question 4). If yes: Please describe the best/most useful features of the Stewards of Children training.

6. Many people believe that 'norms change' is essential for the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect. Do you agree? If so, which social norms are most useful to influence/change?

7. Name organizations, groups, and/or sectors[7] in Oregon (or your state) that have a key role to play in building a sustainable child abuse primary prevention system.

7 For our purposes, a 'sector' is a public (government) or private (e.g., church, non-profit, civic) subdivision of a community such as public health, business, education and early learning, parent education, criminal justice.

Appendix B

Full list of Adult Curriculum

Adult curriculum identified through participant interviews/discussions (listed alphabetically)

Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity Certified Peer Education
Allyship in Action- Interactive training on the oppressive history of Oregon
AORTA Anti-oppression Facilitation
Beyond Stewards of Children, other Darkness to Light Trainings in addition to Stewards of Children
Circles of Safety
Comprehensive Prevention Training
Connections Matter
Dallas CAC Trainings
Enough!
Headwater Coaching Training
Help That Helps
HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences)
Hot Chocolate Talk Campaign
MBF Child Safety Matters
Older, Wiser, Sexually Smarter
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence Trainings
Parents for Prevention
PCA Iowa Healthy Relationships Project
PCA Vermont Trainings
Sex Ed Boot Camp
Strengthening Families
The Family Acceptance Project
Triple P Positive Parenting Program
Understanding ACEs

Additional adult curriculum identified through ongoing literature review project

ACT/Parents Raising Safe Kids
Effective Black Parenting Program

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