

Children are Sacred

Fact Sheet for Schools & Educators

Understanding Problematic Sexual Behavior in Youth – A Factsheet for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes.

Much of Native culture is based on the Circle of Life. Culture teaches us that we are all relatives to all things in creation. Some of the threads in the Circle have become broken. Teachers can help mend the Circle by understanding the needs of youth and families.

Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) is youth-initiated behavior that involves sexual body parts in a manner that is developmentally inappropriate and potentially harmful.¹

Prevention of PSB in the schools can be supported by programming in classes as young as pre-K through high school. Privacy, boundaries, rules about sexual behavior, and responses to PSB can be readily taught and reinforced in the classroom in developmentally appropriate ways.

Role

School teachers, counselors and staff help ensure the safety, health and well-being of students. As mandatory reporters, school staff may identify students with PSB and child victims. Title IX requires schools to address sexual violence promptly, thoroughly and fairly. Title IX also requires schools to respond even if a sexual assault occurs off-campus and is not connected to a school-sponsored activity.²

Trauma

Trauma-informed principles can help youth and families. These include: the need for safety, supervision, protection, guidance, monitoring, teaching, to know they are connected, sacred and honored.³

Known Problematic Sexual Behaviors

- Understand typical child development and sexual development. Know what is typical for students with developmental delays or medical conditions.
- Know guidelines of when sexual behavior is concerning, problematic or harmful.

These factors include:

- » sexual behavior among children who differ in age/ability/size,
- » anytime force, coercion is used,

- » intrusive sexual behavior,
- » when fear, sadness, anxiety, or strong anger related to the sexual behavior is present in the child, or
- » when behavior continues even after you or another adult has addressed the behavior.
- Work with school administrators to ensure these behaviors are identified, addressed and supports are in place.
- Consider development and behavioral issues including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, autism spectrum disorder, language and learning disabilities and other reactions to trauma.
- Address sexual education topics with students.
-Include technology-related issues, such as sexting.
- Address ways to safeguards use of technology in schools.
- Support abuse-prevention strategies and skills.
- Talk with students about personal space and privacy.
- Teach students to respect the privacy of others and healthy sexual boundaries.

Report Problematic Sexual Behaviors

Know your school's policy on reporting suspected sexual abuse. Support school planning and revisions to update protocols as needed.

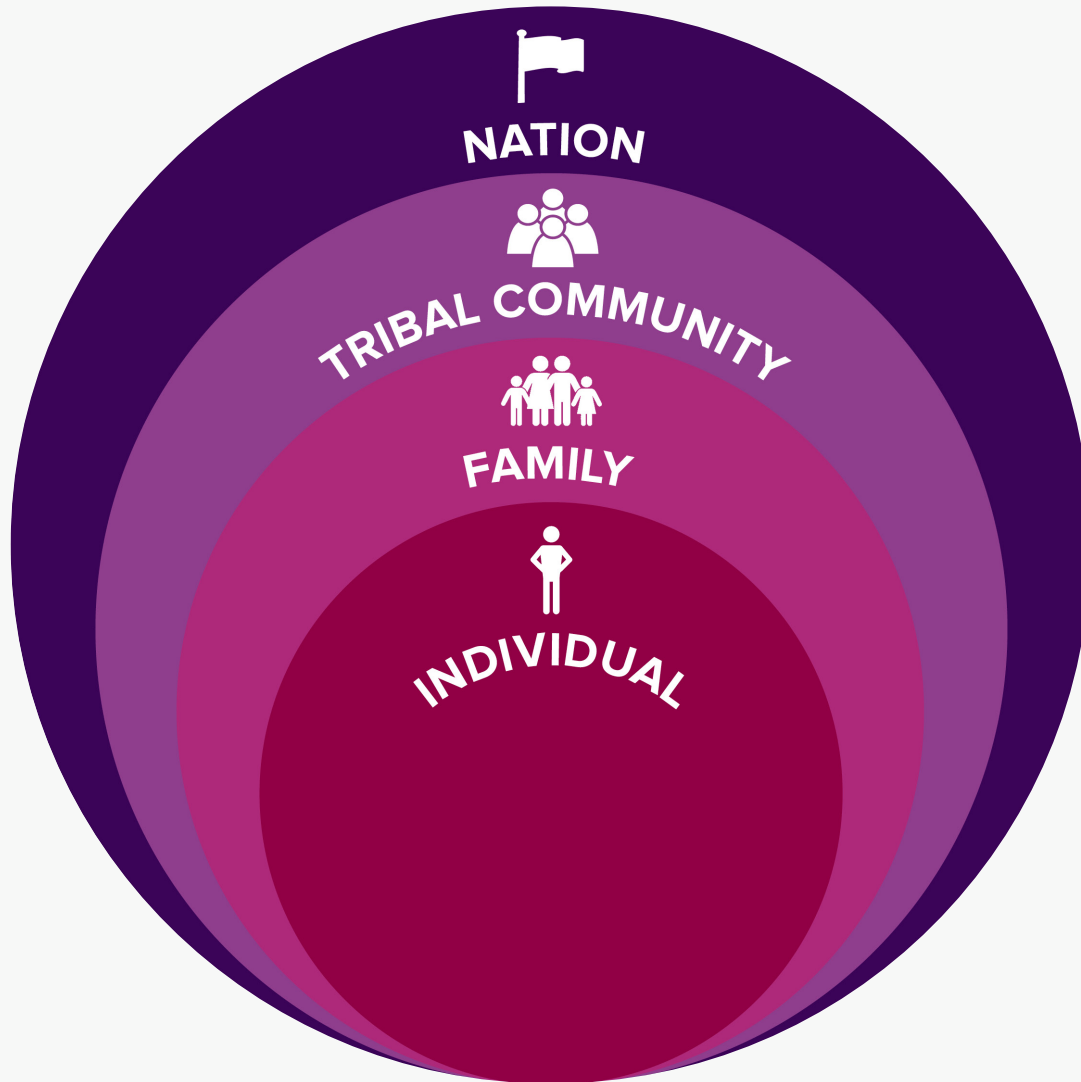
If you are concerned that a student has problematic sexual behavior or is the child victim of problematic sexual behavior, follow school and tribal protocols, as well as state laws.

Risk Factors

Risk factors for youth with PSB are universal and not based on any demographic, psychological or social factors. The NCSBY identified the following individual, family and community-level factors that may be helpful for understanding youth with PSB.

- Sexual abuse, particularly when it occurs at a young age, involves multiple perpetrators, or is intrusive.
- Lack of information or limited accurate information about bodies and sexuality, unhealthy boundaries or privacy in the home, exposure to adults' sexual activity or nudity, pornography or other factors that contribute to a sexualized environment.

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NATION - Empirically based & developmentally appropriate Policies, Laws, Codes, Registries, Statutes



TRIBAL COMMUNITY - Supporting healthy relationships and behavior through Schools, I.H.S., MDTs, Law Enforcement, BIA, Social Services, Courts, Behavioral Health, State Department of Social Services, CPS, Boys and Girls Clubs, Juvenile Justice, Tribal Health, Tribal Child and Family Service, Child Assessment Center, Tribal Protocols, Resolutions, Procedures, Registries



FAMILY - Teach, supervise, ensure privacy, address technology and pornography, address trauma, support healing, drug and alcohol free environment, rites of passage, coming of age ceremonies, culture, values



INDIVIDUAL - Healthy relationships, normal behaviors and sexual development, respect for other persons and boundaries, roles in family and community, spirituality

Information - Empirically informed knowledge improves decision making

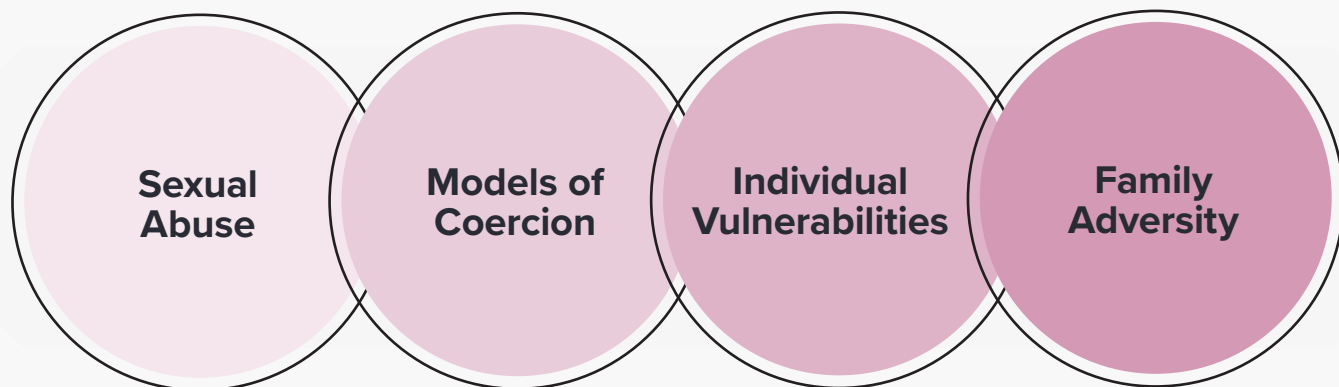
Attitudes & Beliefs - Healthy beliefs that are trauma informed

Access - Empirically based and developmentally appropriate policies and services

Culture - Culturally Congruent and Respectful Approaches

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Contributing Factors



- Exposure to harsh or coercive interactions such as family or community violence, physical abuse, bullying or other factors.
- Child vulnerabilities may hinder a youth's ability to cope with stressful events or control impulses and respect the boundaries of others. These include attention deficit disorder, learning and language delays, reactions to trauma events or other factors.
- Factors that hinder a parent or caregiver's ability to monitor, guide, support and teach their children such as depression, substance use, exposure to abuse and other factors.

Protective Factors

Tribal protocol, practices and ceremonies can facilitate resilience and protective factors in youth. Protective factors that facilitate healthy behaviors and good decisions at the individual, family and community level include the following:

- Adults supervision and guidance provided throughout development.
- Healthy boundaries and coping skills that are modeled and supported.
- Protection from trauma or harm.
- Friendships with peers who make healthy decisions.
- Having experiences of competencies or success.
- Open communication about relationships and sexual matters with healthy adults.³

Research on Problematic Sexual Behavior

- PSB in youth occurs in youth across sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.¹

- More than one-third of sexual offenses against children are committed by other youth.⁴
- Risk for problematic sexual behavior is greatest among youth 12-14 years of age.⁵
- Almost half of child victims of problematic sexual behavior are under 6 years of age.⁵
- Problematic sexual behavior occurs most often between children/youth who know one another—more than 34% of PSB cases involve family members.⁶
- The recent average sexual recidivism rate for adolescents with illegal sexual behavior was less than 3%.⁷

Treatment of Problematic Sexual Behavior

- Effective interventions include active involvement of parents or other caregivers. Effective components of treatment address safety planning, sexual behavior rules, managing child behavior, boundaries, sex education, abuse prevention skills, and child self-regulation and self-control skills. Treatment may also include emotional regulation skills, healthy coping skills, decision-making skills, social skills, restitution and amends.
- Sex education is a key component. Help the child identify someone he or she trusts to talk to about friendship, relationships, and questions about sex, rather than relying on peers or the Internet. Treatment may include learning abuse-prevention and healthy coping skills, impulse-control strategies and decision-making skills, safety plans, and social skills.
- Professionals can advocate for public policies that support treatment for youth with problematic sexual behavior. Use people-first language. Treat as children

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first. Implement developmentally appropriate policies, laws and protocols.

- Professionals can encourage parents to talk with their children about their bodies, body parts, and personal space and privacy in a developmentally appropriate manner beginning at 3 to 4 years of age.
- Support open communication about relationships, intimacy, consent, prevention of abuse, pornography, and other related topics in a developmentally appropriate manner with trusted adults.

“When people don’t understand what they can do about it (PSB), they just turn the other way. They have to accept, like okay this is the issue, but then what do I do about it? If they don’t have an answer, they just ignore it and it becomes overwhelming, shocking, in the community, and for our children. We have to be open and honest about it.”

– Janet Routzen, Associate Judge Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Resources For Schools

Responding to Children’s Problem Sexual Behavior in Elementary Schools

www.ncsby.org/sites/default/files/School%20Prob%20Sexual%20Behavior.pdf

Private Part Rules for Preschoolers

www.newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Private-Part-Rules-for-preschool.pdf

Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide

www.virtusonline.org/educators/Teaching-Boundaries-and-Safety-Guide-English.pdf

US Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway on state and Tribal laws and policies

www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/?hasBeenRedirected=1



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