

Protecting our Children from Abuse

Effects of Child Abuse are devastating and last entire lives:

FACT: 99% of inmates in San Quentin Prison were either abused or raised in abusive households

Abuse can be defined as physical, sexual, physiological or combinations of any of these types of abuse, which can include Facebook, IM, twitter, etc.

Child Abuse Most Often Occurs When:

child lives without one biological parent
when the mother is unavailable (work/illness)
adult relationships are violent
child has poor relationship with adults
child is an 'outlier' i.e. awkward around others and often a loner
child lives with a step-father or extended family

90% of abuse is initiated by individuals whom they know and trust, i.e.: teachers, coaches, care givers, community leaders. Child-to-child abuse has grown by 300% since 2000.

An Enormous Problem:

1 in 5 (20%) individuals, 1 in 3 (33%) women, 1 in 5 (20%) of men are victimized...and the problem is growing

66% of victims will not report abuse before adulthood

90% of predators avoid criminal justice system, and some begin victimizing others as early teens.

Average age of predator is 35 years of age, and often a predator has 150 male or 52 female victims before being reported, so unfortunately our multi-layered background screenings do not assure safety.

How To Reduce Risk:

Appropriate adult supervision and create culture of communication
Watch for 'grooming' or befriending of adults and victims by predator
Be cautious of situations in bathroom/shower-changing areas
Be cautious of sleep overs, or group/team overnights
Avoid special privileges and secrecy
Be sure to monitor potentially dangerous areas such as bathrooms, shower/changing areas and isolated locations
Teach children appropriate boundaries and it's OK to say no
When interacting with children do so in situations where others can overhear and avoid giving children rides home alone.

What To Do:

Report possible abuse if there is a suspicion...it does not need to be confirmed.

Listen to children. The main reason children do not report abuse is because they are afraid they will not be believed, or fear derived from threats to parents, pets or selves by the predator.

USATF has joined the US Olympic Committee in promoting the *SafeSport* initiative to bring greater awareness to identifying and preventing child abuse. Further information is on-line at www.usatf.org or <http://safesport.org/>

References: Rebecca J Donatelle, *Health: The basics*, and abuse training program from www.abusepreventionsystems.com. Compiled by USATF-Pacific President/Coaches Chair Dr. Dave Shrock.

We need to proactively protect our greatest resources...our children!