

Sample Questions for Parents to Ask Youth-Serving Organizations to Reduce Sexual Risk to Children

We are pleased to offer this free downloadable and printable resource with child safety questions to ask youth-serving organizations before enrolling your children in their programs. This resource is designed to empower adults with organized, thoughtfully categorized questions to help ensure the sexual safety and well-being of children in all types of youth-serving settings.

How to Use This Guide There's no need to ask every question included in this resource. Instead, prioritize questions based on the specific type of program your child will be joining and the safety topics that are most important to you. Think of this resource as a customizable tool to guide your conversation effectively.

Starting the Conversation We understand that bringing up child sexual abuse prevention and safety concerns to an organization or program can feel uncomfortable. It's helpful to communicate thoughtfully and kindly and to avoid sounding overbearing or difficult. Here's an example of how to start the conversation with kindness and clarity:

"I've recently learned more about child sexual abuse prevention and safety practices, and it has encouraged me to ask a few questions to feel more confident about the programs we're exploring. I'd love to learn more about how your organization prioritizes child safety. May I ask a few questions?"

This approach sets a positive and curious tone and encourages a productive conversation. It's also a chance to raise awareness and even offer helpful resources, such as:

- **The Diana Screen®** for screening applicants for sexual safety.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's manual on *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Practices*
- Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children* sexual abuse prevention training for staff

Sharing resources can support organizations and encourage exploring areas for improvement.

Discussing Safety Screening Many youth-serving organizations use The Diana Screen® during the application process to screen applicants for sexual risk to children. These organizations know they must do more than criminal background checks to protect children since background checks are not effective at protecting children from sexual abuse or the crossing of their sexual boundaries.

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Hiring and Staffing

1. Do you use written applications?
Yes No _____
2. Do you interview every potential employee and volunteer?
Yes No _____
3. Do you use *The Diana Screen*® to screen applicants for sexual risk to children?
Yes No _____
4. Do you hire older youth? Yes No
If yes, how are they screened? _____
5. Do you perform the following screens/checks?
The Diana Screen® Yes No _____
Criminal Background Yes No _____
Sex Offender Registry Yes No _____
Abuse/Neglect Registry Yes No _____
6. Do you check personal and professional references?
Yes No _____
7. Do you ask the provided references for additional references to contact?
Yes No _____
8. Do you ask the references if the applicant would be a good candidate for working with children, or if there is any reason this person should not work with children?
Yes No _____
9. Do you have child sexual abuse prevention policies and other safety policies?
Yes No _____
10. Do you directly inform applicants of your child sexual abuse protection policies and procedures? Yes No _____
11. Do you ask applicants if they have a problem with any of the policies and procedures?
Yes No _____
12. Do you require applicants to sign a document describing the policies and procedures of your organization, to demonstrate their understanding and agreement?
Yes No _____

13. Are your caretakers paid staff or volunteers? Paid Volunteer Some of Both

14. Where do you advertise employment/volunteer opportunities? _____

Class Size and Management

1. How many children are in your program? _____
2. What is your adult-to-child ratio? _____
3. Do you have a “no closed door” policy?
Yes No _____
4. Are there clear lines of sight throughout the areas where you provide your program?
Yes No _____
5. How are older youth monitored when supervising children? _____
6. How are interactions between children and teens structured? _____
7. What is the minimum age at which an older youth is allowed to supervise children in the program? _____
8. At any time, are teens permitted to be alone with children, as their only caretaker, during the program? Yes No _____
9. Do parents have an open invitation to observe children participating in your program?
Yes No _____
10. How do you ensure that all one-adult-one-child interactions can be observed and interrupted? _____

Training and Policies

1. How do you train your staff and volunteers in sexual abuse prevention and response?

2. What staff prevention training does the organization provide (e.g., *Stewards of Children*)?

3. What policies do you have in place to prevent child sexual abuse and boundary violations?

4. What is your policy regarding one-on-one time between adults and children? _____

5. What are your policies about staff and volunteers transporting children? _____

6. What are your policies for reducing risk during activities such as toileting, showering, and changing clothes that consider not just the risk of employee/volunteer sexual abuse, but also the risk of inappropriate or harmful contact among youth? _____

Reporting Procedures

1. Are parents notified immediately when a report of abuse is made?
Yes No _____
2. What are the procedures and penalties if a staff member or volunteer violates the child sexual abuse prevention policy? _____
3. Describe your organization's clear guidelines for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse to authorities _____
4. What are the reporting steps when a staff member or volunteer is suspected of crossing a child's sexual boundaries, grooming, or sexual abuse? _____

5. What prompt action is taken if a staff or volunteer behaves inappropriately or breaches a policy? _____
6. How do you train, allow, and empower your staff and volunteers to report inappropriate behavior, breaches in policy, and allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse? _____

*Questions compiled from Abel Screening, Inc./The Diana Screen®; Child Molestation Research & Prevention Institute; Darkness to Lights, "Step Up & Speak Out: A Parent Guide for Selecting Youth Serving Organizations"; and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures."