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### **Outline for Mandatory Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education**

In the interest of curbing the current epidemic of child sexual abuse, it is imperative that we act to empower our children to recognize inappropriate adult behavior and report it to adults they can trust. Whereas our teachers are tasked with not only educating our children but also preparing them for life outside the walls of their schools and homes, and whereas sexual abuse can irreparably alter the trajectory of a child's life, it is incumbent upon us to insist, not only that our institutions promptly report abuse when it happens, but that our children receive an education that empowers them to protect themselves from potential abuse. Furthermore, shifting abuse prevention education to the school setting not only helps make the institution itself safer, but also prepares children for situations in which the abuse is occurring outside of an institutional setting by someone the child knows.

To achieve that goal, we set forth the following objectives:

- Providing an age-appropriate abuse-prevention curriculum to all children in grades Pre-K-8
- Providing resources and educational materials to parents and/or guardians in parallel to their children's curriculum, as well as information on how to spot red-flags indicating abuse in their children, proper procedure for handling disclosures from their children, and information on how to report abuse to the proper civil authorities should they suspect or their children disclose abuse.
- Providing training, resources, and educational materials to school faculty and staff on proper procedures governing interactions with students, proper reporting procedures for suspected abuse or in the wake of a disclosure, information on how to spot red-flags indicating abuse in students, proper procedure for handling a disclosure made by a student, as well as proper procedure for reporting any generally inappropriate interactions between school faculty or staff and students to the administration.

Curricula should include the following requirements:

- Curricula should be designed to offer clear, thorough education appropriate to the age of each grade level
- In order to ensure engagement with the students as well as retention of the material:
  - A minimum of 6 separate sessions should be required
  - Lessons should include a diverse array of tools including:
    - Lecture, where age-appropriate
    - Audio/Visual presentations
    - Worksheets to be done both collaboratively and individually in the classroom
    - Interactive components to the class including use of dolls and/or puppets, as well a role playing exercises between teachers and students, and between students and their fellow classmates

- Worksheets and other materials for students to take home and work on collaboratively with their parent or guardian
- Curricular materials should be inclusive and diverse. Children from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds should be able to see the people they interact with in their daily lives reflected in the materials.
- While materials must be culturally aware and sensitive, they must require that all instruction be given using anatomically correct terms, without the use of euphemism.
  - This is to ensure that when a child discloses to an adult, that adult, regardless of their cultural background, can clearly understand the disclosure.
- Curricula should include the following topics:
  - Safe touch vs unsafe touch
    - This should include materials for the students to be able to determine for themselves things like personal boundaries, personal space, etc
  - Safe strangers vs Unsafe strangers
  - Buddy system
    - This includes instruction on how to insist on avoiding one-on-one situations, which accounts for a significant portion of abuse opportunities
  - Body Autonomy and the right to assert that autonomy
    - It should be made clear to students that this includes their right to assert their body autonomy in any situation that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, even if the person making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable is an adult they've been told to trust, like a parent, grandparent, respected community member, family friend, etc
  - Personal safety
  - How to react to unsafe situations
    - This should include roleplaying, discussion of scenarios, and specific instruction on actions to be taken in an unsafe situation
  - How to report to one of 5 Trusted Adults
    - It should be made clear to students that these 5 Trusted Adults will always listen to them, believe them, and take seriously anything disclosed to them
- Materials geared to parents and/or guardians that offer, in parallel to the in-classroom lessons given to children:
  - An explanation of what the children are learning in class
  - Tips for initiating conversations with their children about what they've learned in class
  - Materials detailing various warning signs, risk factors, and red flags for abuse, and how to look out for them
  - Materials on how to properly respond to a disclosure made by a child
  - Materials detailing specific procedures and resources for filing a report with law enforcement or child protective services in the wake of a disclosure
  - Resources for parents to contact should their child disclose abuse. These resources include:
    - Child advocacy centers
    - Available resources to provide therapy to children and families affected by abuse
    - Crisis centers

Teachers should receive mandatory training in the following areas every few years:

- Guidelines on safe boundaries to maintain with children, including:
  - Guidelines on which situations warrant or in which situations it is acceptable for a teacher to physically touch a student
  - Guidelines on how to respect a student's body autonomy in any such situation
  - Guidelines on proper procedures when contacting a student outside of school, by email, SMS, or any other method
- Training in relevant mandatory reporting laws, including:
  - Duty to report
  - The importance of prompt reporting
  - The obligation to report directly to law enforcement or CPS before reporting to school administration
  - Penalties for failure to report
  - Specific procedures for how to file a report with law enforcement or CPS
- Detailed explanations of the effects of sexual abuse on children
- Materials detailing various warning signs, risk factors, and red flags for abuse, and how to look out for them
- Instruction on how to handle and respond to a child who discloses sexual abuse
- Tips and strategies to enable teachers to foster an environment in which a student would feel comfortable making a disclosure to a teacher
- Specific guidelines and procedures on how to report generally inappropriate (not specifically abusive) behavior by fellow faculty or school staff violative of student boundary guidelines

If it can be said that it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a village to abuse one, then it will take a comprehensive, holistic, community effort to stem the tide of child sexual abuse. Coupled with recent legislative reforms to mandated reporter laws, and legislation like the Child Victims Act, this education mandate will ensure not only that our institutions and communities are safer, and that our children are empowered to assert themselves against people and situations that make them feel unsafe, but also that we are all of us aware of the extent of the problem, aware of the terrible cost of ignoring it, and committed to no longer tolerating, enabling, or turning a blind eye to child sexual abuse. From our schools to our homes to our children themselves, this law will make New York State a safer place not only for our children, but for all of our future generations.