



DARKNESS to LIGHT

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

Child sexual abuse increases the risk for a host of mental health problems, behavioral issues, and medical conditions. It is not simply an issue for social service departments, child abuse organizations or law enforcement agencies - it is a national public health issue.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ISSUE

Imagine a disease that affected one in 10 U.S. citizens, a disease associated with not only immediate trauma, but a wide array of long-term consequences, including:

- substance abuse, depression, and suicide
- hypertension, heart problems, stroke, and cancer
- behavioral, psychological, and chronic physical problems

We would likely read about this disease in health magazines and medical journals. We would see it on news programs and addressed by prominent members of society. We would be talking about prevention.

One in 10 children will be sexually abused before the age of 18.

The overwhelming impact of child sexual abuse on health makes it a critical issue for the healthcare industry to address and prevent.

PREVENTION IN HEALTHCARE

It is widely known that disease and illness prevention is more effective and less expensive than treating subsequent medical conditions. Yet, relatively few leaders in healthcare have considered programming to prevention child sexual abuse.

The average lifetime cost of sexual abuse per victim is over \$210,000, and 70 percent of all reported sexual assaults happen to children under the age of 18.



HIDDEN HEALTH COSTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Over 70% of male survivors seek treatment for issues like **substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and attempted suicide.**

Middle-aged women who were sexually abused as children are **2x more likely** to struggle with **obesity.**

Adults with a history of child sexual abuse are **30% more likely** to have a serious medical condition like **diabetes, heart problems, or cancer.**

Females who are sexually abused as children are **3x more likely** to develop **psychiatric disorders.**

obesity
mental disorders
suicide
substance abuse



STEWARDS OF CHILDREN

It is possible for adults to dramatically reduce risk for child sexual abuse by minimizing factors that contribute to abuse and by changing caregiving norms.

Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children*® prevention training is a 2-hour program that provides parents, communities, and organizations with both an understanding of the issue and the tools needed to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.



ADULT-FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

Until recently, only child-focused child sexual abuse prevention programming was available. While it is important to teach children concepts such as body safety and “uncomfortable touch,” we cannot place the burden of prevention on their shoulders. As adults, it is our responsibility to protect children.

The factors that create risk for child sexual abuse are well-established by research, but studies show that adults are generally not aware of them. This is why education is key to prevention. We believe adults who are trained and empowered to protect children will choose to do so.

A METHOD WORTH TESTING

Taking on child sexual abuse prevention in order to improve health is a groundbreaking strategy. The underlying logic and potential for long-term positive impact on the health of not only children, but entire societies, make it an approach worth evaluating.

For more information on Stewards of Children, visit www.D2L.org/Stewards.

Join the movement to end child sexual abuse! Visit www.D2L.org/Join for more information.

