

Safety in Youth Activities and Sports

By: Bright Tomorrows Staff

With sports and activities in full swing for our students and schools, it is important, as parents, to know our children are safe and protected.

Youth programs and sports clubs can have policies and procedures in place that greatly reduce the likelihood of child sexual abuse occurring. These choices and policies give safety and protection to the children involved in their program or club.

There are several things that a parent can look for to increase safety. The program/activity should:

- Screen their staff/volunteers including: background checks, personal interviews, and professional/personal references.
- Have a formal training for staff and volunteers to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.
- Limit one child/one adult situations (80% of sexual abuse occurs in this one on one situation).
- Have policies regarding one child/ one adult activities which make these observable or able to be interrupted.
- Have policies regarding reporting abuse or concerning situations and have clear reporting procedures.

If a person has the intent of sexually abusing children they will be interested and drawn to settings where they have access to children, such as children's clubs, schools, church programs, and activities. This does not mean that everyone who gives their time or energy to children's programs has this intent.

The occurrence of child sexual abuse is a collective choice. It doesn't simply happen on its own. People have to collaborate, knowingly or unknowingly, for it to happen. It is not only sexual offenders who create sexual abuse. Adults who foster environments that allow it to occur also create the possibility of child sexual abuse.

It is important for parents to talk to the organizations their children are involved with and ensure such policies and procedures are being followed. For more information about Bright Tomorrows visit www.brightcac.org.