



Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse – Experiences from Implementing the CAP Program

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UDRUGA RODITELJA



CAP

Child Assault Prevention

Program for the Prevention of Child Abuse

A primary prevention program

CAP is an educational prevention program: Children are informed about the problem in a developmentally appropriate way and are directed to sources of support in the community, while at the same time empowering important adults in children's lives to provide correct information and appropriate support.



CAP

Child Assault Prevention

Objectives of the CAP Program

- Teach children to recognize potentially dangerous and offensive situations
- Provide strategies that can help children when they find themselves in such situations
- Encourage children to disclose abuse if it happened in the past or is still happening
- Educate parents and teachers about abuse and neglect so they can face such problems and respond appropriately



CAP CURRICULUM

Preschool CAP

Elementary CAP

Special Needs CAP

TeenCAP





Implementation of the CAP Program

- CAP has been implemented since 1978 – ICAP (USA)
- In Croatia since 1999
- Conducted by the Parents Association Step by Step – Regional Training Center
- Implemented throughout Croatia
- 2000–2025: reached over 120000 children, 80000 parents, and 25000 school staff

1. Workshop for the entire school staff
2. Workshops for parents
3. Workshops for children
4. Time for individual consultation



Teaching children to recognize danger and respond appropriately in several different situations:

- When abuser is child (cases of bullying)
- When abuser is unknown adult
- When abuser is known adult (especially important for the cases of sexual abuse)

CAP Curriculum Focus

- Communication about violence between children and adults
- Knowledge and use of self-protection strategies in potentially dangerous situations
- Knowledge and use of self-protection strategies in situations when the abuser is a known adult (most often in cases of child sexual abuse)

CAP's Contribution to the Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Increased knowledge about children's rights, self-confidence, and awareness and attitudes regarding sexual harassment and abuse
- Better understanding and recognition of forms of sexual harassment (e.g., sexual jokes, name-calling)
- Greater likelihood of reporting sexual harassment or abuse (personally or involving a close friend)

CAP's Contribution to the Prevention of Sexual Abuse

- Increased knowledge about what to do if sexually harassed or abused
- Increased knowledge about what to do if someone close to them is sexually abused



How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Open, Honest Communication

- Start early and talk often: Use age-appropriate language to teach children about their bodies, privacy, and boundaries.
- Name body parts correctly: Use accurate terms (e.g., “penis,” “vulva”) so children can describe experiences clearly if something happens.
- Normalize discussions: Encourage children to ask questions about their bodies and safety without shame or fear.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Education About Boundaries and Consent

- Teach body autonomy: Make sure children understand that their body belongs to them — they can say no to unwanted touch, even from family members.
- Model consent: Ask for permission before physical contact (like hugs or tickles) to show respect for boundaries.
- Explain “safe” and “unsafe” touch: Clarify that no one should touch private parts except for health or hygiene reasons, and even then, only with consent.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Build Trust and Emotional Safety

- Be approachable: Children must feel safe talking to parents about anything, without fear of blame or punishment.
- Listen calmly: If a child shares something worrying, stay calm and supportive — panic or anger can make them shut down.
- Believe and support: Always take a child's disclosure seriously and reassure them that they did the right thing by telling you.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Be Involved and Aware

- Know who spends time with your child: Be familiar with teachers, coaches, babysitters, and family friends.
- Set rules for private time: For example, no closed doors when playing, or ensuring supervision at sleepovers and online interactions.
- Monitor digital activity: Teach safe internet habits, explain online grooming risks, and maintain open dialogue about social media.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Strengthen Community Awareness

- Join or support prevention programs: Programs like CAP (Child Assault Prevention) empower both children and adults with safety skills.
- Encourage school participation: Advocate for abuse prevention education in schools and childcare centers.
- Promote protective environments: Support organizations that train staff on child safeguarding policies.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Responding if Abuse Is Suspected

- Stay calm and protect the child: Move them to safety and avoid confronting the alleged abuser directly.
- Report immediately: Contact child protection services, the police, or a local helpline.
- Seek professional help: Counseling can help both the child and family process trauma and rebuild trust.

How can parents and families be support in the prevention of sexual abuse of children

The most powerful protection comes from informed, connected, and caring adults who build trust and communication with children every day.

Thank you 😊



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