



GUIDE

Framework for Sensitive Programming

We encourage you to think carefully about how to create a supportive environment and to adequately prepare participants for the conversations in which they will engage. Initiating dialogue about child maltreatment requires sensitivity, particularly given that individuals may have a personal connection to the topic, either through their own experiences or knowledge of others' experiences.

The following strategies can be used to provide intentional support for those participating in conversations about child maltreatment. Consider using or adapting these options or crafting others that you feel will work best in your communal setting.

Offer verbal and/or written content notice before mentioning abuse or maltreatment.

- Prepare program participants for what they will encounter and allow them to make individual choices about their emotional preparedness for a conversation. In particular, content notices help victim-survivors have agency over their own exposure to potentially upsetting material.

Approach every conversation with the same sensitivity you would have in speaking with a victim-survivor;

- Because we are never sure of what experiences individuals have had, don't assume that a person, even one you know well, does not have a personal connection to child maltreatment.
- Remain attuned to the range of individuals' experiences and backgrounds throughout the process.

Avoid judgment statements or probing questions.

- Don't ever ask why someone (even a third party) isn't "over it yet" or suggest that a particular kind of maltreatment "wasn't as bad as it could have been."

Best Practice 2

Create Opportunities for Community Dialogue

Goal 3

Introduce the Community to the Initiative

OBJECTIVE

Review strategies for creating a sensitive and supportive environment within which community dialogue takes place.

AUDIENCE

Child Safety Committee

TIME

5 minutes to read, ongoing implementation

Listen empathically to everyone.

- Even when you don't fully understand or agree with what is being said, stay in active listening mode. Before opening opportunities for group dialogue, emphasize that empathic listening is essential to communal growth.

Have a mental health professional present.

- Designate a mental health professional — ideally someone experienced in working with abuse/trauma victim-survivors — to be available to those who may need extra support during or after a program. Announce this person's presence both before and after the program.

Provide additional resources for people beyond your conversations.

- Set up a table of flyers with phone numbers for national or local crisis response hotlines. Distribute business cards with the Committee email address in case individuals want to follow up privately after the program.

Continue to explore techniques and practices that can establish the sensitive, open, and compassionate tone you wish to maintain. You should revisit the techniques you use at one program to determine how you might adjust them for future events.

Finally and crucially, remember to follow up with anyone — whether child or adult — who discloses abuse or harassment to help ensure that they are receiving the support they need. Members of your community may need more than a one-time gesture of support from a Committee member and should instead receive ongoing support from professionals. *See Best Practice 8: Develop Protocols for Responding* to learn more about how to respond to disclosures of maltreatment or abuse.