



WHAT TEACHERS CAN DO TO PROTECT CHILDREN?

Children can be subjected to neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation anywhere. There is some abuse that may happen inside the school premises, while a lot of it is what children suffer at home and in non-school environments. A child in your class may be a victim of violence/abuse/exploitation that happens outside the school. You cannot ignore it. Rather you must help the child. This too is possible only if you are able to identify that there is a problem and you spend time to understand it and explore possible solutions.

Always remember that your duty to protect children does not come to an end once you are out of the school premises. The life of a child who is out of the school system can be changed with your positive intervention. You just have to prepare yourself for it and know more about their problems as well as what you can do to help.

Once you are mentally prepared and equipped to tackle the problem you will be able to do many things you have never dreamt you are capable of doing.

Are you a child-friendly teacher? This is what will make you one.

- Understand children's rights as human rights and create such awareness in the community as well.
- Make children feel it is worthwhile attending your class.
- Be open to learning.
- Be a Friend, Philosopher and Guide to the child.
- Make the classes interesting and informative. Avoid one-way communication and give opportunities to children to come up with their doubts and queries.
- Learn to recognise and identify abuse, neglect, learning disorders and other not so visible disabilities.
- Create a relationship where children can express their views, concerns, anguish, fear etc. Try to engage with children in informal discussions.
- Be a good listener. Share and discuss various issues and problems which children are facing either in school or at home.
- Encourage children's participation in matters that affect their lives.
- Build children's capacities to participate effectively.
- Organise meetings of children with school authorities.
- Discuss child rights issues with the parents in the PTA meetings.
- Say NO to corporal punishment. Use positive reinforcement techniques like dialogue and counseling to discipline children.
- Say NO to discrimination. Take active steps to reach out to children from minority and other discriminated groups.
- Stop negative stereotyping and discrimination against working children, street children, child victims of sexual abuse, trafficking, domestic violence or drug abuse and children in conflict with law, to name a few categories of those who need protection.
- Stop use of child labour in your home and workplace.
- Be democratic but not unstructured.
- Ensure children are protected within the school as well

as in the community, even if it requires calling the police and taking/facilitating legal action.

- Encourage them to put forward their views before the adults and the community.
- Involve children in organising events. Give them responsibilities and at the same time give them the required guidance.
- Take children to nearby places for picnics and pleasure trips.
- Engage children in discussions/debates/quiz and other recreational activities.
- Encourage education and participation of girls through creative measures within the classroom.
- Follow-up on girls who drop out or attend irregularly to ensure it does not continue.
- All teachers can help in creating and strengthening a protective environment around children.
- Your observations are important, as they alone will help you to assess the growth and progress of a child in your class. If you see a problem, your next step should be to explore what could be the possible reason.
- Next question to yourself should be whether the child is under any pressures from family, relatives or friends.
- Spend some time with the child privately, without being imposing, humiliating and creating an embarrassing situation for the child.
- Help the child express her/his problem either through drawing and painting or by writing a story or simply talking to you or the school counsellor/social worker or to a friend in the class.

Creating and strengthening a protective environment for children requires many levels of engagement, which in turn demand dialogue, partnerships, and coordination based on a shared analysis. Many of its components correspond to

traditional development activities and approaches, such as improving basic services, monitoring results, and recognising individuals as actors in their own development.

Teachers must be aware of the government's schemes for children and what they have to offer. Identify children and families that require assistance and could be helped through any of the existing Government schemes. A list of such children and families can be handed over to your Block/Taluka/Mandal Panchayat Member or BDPO directly.

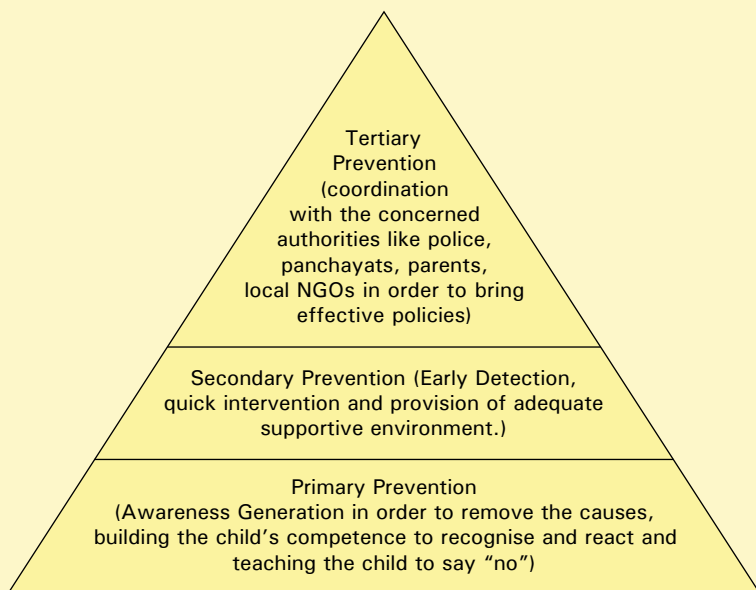
People you must liaise with if you want to protect children include:

- The Police.
- Your Panchayat/Municipal Corporation Head/Member.
- Anganwadi Workers.
- ANMs.
- Block/Taluka/Mandal and Zila Panchayat Members.
- Block Development Officer (BDO) or Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO).
- Community Development Officer (CDO) or Community Development and Panchayat Officer.
- District Magistrate/ District Collector.
- Nearest Child Welfare Committee.
- Child Line Organisations in your area.

How as a teacher can you ensure that the rights of an HIV infected or affected child are not violated?

- Impart sex education to children based on their age and level of maturity.
- Inform the children about HIV/AIDS. How it spreads and affects an individual, and how can we prevent it from spreading further?
- Create an enabling environment in the class-room to ensure that infected and affected kids are not stigmatised.

Prevention Pyramid for any child protection issue



Note: Adapted from Asha Krishnakumar, Silent victim, Frontline, Volume 20 - Issue 21, 11–24 October, 2003 – the three stages of preventing child sexual abuse

Identifying Child Sexual Abuse

Signs of sexual abuse in children and adolescents

	6-11 Years	12-17 Years
GIRLS	Engages in explicit sexual behaviours with other children.	Sexually exploitative interactions with younger children
	Verbally describes experiences of sexual abuse.	Sexually promiscuous behaviour or total avoidance of sexual involvement
	Excessive concern or preoccupation with private parts.	Eating disturbances
	Sexualised relating to adults.	Efforts to distance from feelings of guilt, shame and humiliation

	Sudden fear or mistrust of males, females or specific places.	Running away from home
	Age inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour.	
	Sleep disturbances: Nightmares and night terrors	
BOYS	Engages in explicit sexual behaviours with other children	Sexually exploitative or aggressive interactions with younger children
	Sudden fear or mistrust of males, females or specific places	Regressive behaviour
	Sleep disturbances: Night mares and night terrors	Acting out and risk taking behaviour
	Sudden aggressive behaviour or acting out	Efforts to distance from feelings of guilt, shame and humiliation
	Loss of interest in previous interests	
	Regressive behaviour	

Precautions: The above mentioned signs or symptoms are to be considered only as rough guidelines to indicate that a child is in trouble and that the cause may be sexual abuse. It is very important, however, not to jump on any individual symptom or behaviour and conclude that abuse has taken place. Rather you must look for groups of symptoms and use your intuition.

(Source: UNICEF, Teacher's Talking about Learning (<http://www.unicef.org/teachers/> Last revised April, 1999) from: I. Leth, UNICEF Child Protection)

Children are often taught to obey adults. In the process they forget to say "no" to the adults, even if they do not like the behaviour or attitude of the adults.

Teach children to say "no" in such situations.

Ten messages about children with disabilities

1. Prevent negative stereotypical attitudes about children with disabilities by avoiding negative words, such as “disabled,” “crippled,” “handicapped,” instead of “a child with a physical or movement disability”; “wheelchair bound” for “a child who uses wheelchair”, “deaf and dumb” instead of “a child with hearing and speech disability”, or “retarded” for “a child with mental disability.”
2. Depict children with disabilities with equal status as those without disabilities. For example, a student with a disability can tutor a younger child without a disability. Children with disabilities should interact with non-disabled children in as many ways as possible.
3. Allow children with disabilities to speak for themselves and express their thoughts and feelings. Involve children with and without disabilities in the same projects and encourage their mutual participation.
4. Observe children and identify disabilities. Early detection of disabilities has become part of early-childhood education. The earlier a disability is detected in a child, the more effective the intervention and the less severe the disability.
5. Refer the child whose disability is identified, for developmental screening and early intervention.
6. Adapt the lessons, learning materials and classroom to the needs of children with disabilities. Use means such as large print, seating the child in the front of the class, and making the classroom accessible for the child with a movement disability. Integrate positive ideas about disabilities into classwork, children’s play and other activities.
7. Sensitise parents, families, and caregivers about the special needs of children with disabilities. Speak to parents in meetings as well as on a one-to-one basis.
8. Teach frustrated parents simple ways to deal with

and manage their child's needs and help them to have patience to prevent abuse of the disabled child.

9. Guide siblings and other family members in lessening the pain and frustration of parents of children with disabilities, by being helpful.
10. Actively involve parents of young children with disabilities as full team members in planning school and after school activities.

Source: UNICEF, Teacher's Talking about Learning (<http://www.unicef.org/teachers> Last revised April, 1999)

Adopt and Encourage Constructive Disciplinary Practices that Respect the Human Dignity of Children

- Respect the child's dignity.
- Develop pro-social behavior, self-discipline, and character.
- Maximise the child's active participation.
- Respect the child's developmental needs and quality of life.
- Respect the child's motivational characteristics and life views.
- Assure fairness and transformative justice.
- Promote solidarity.

Source: Eliminating Corporal Punishment: The Way Forward to Constructive Child Discipline - A UNESCO Publication.

SURELY, CHANGING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT WILL BE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE.

Is your school child-friendly? This is how it can be one:

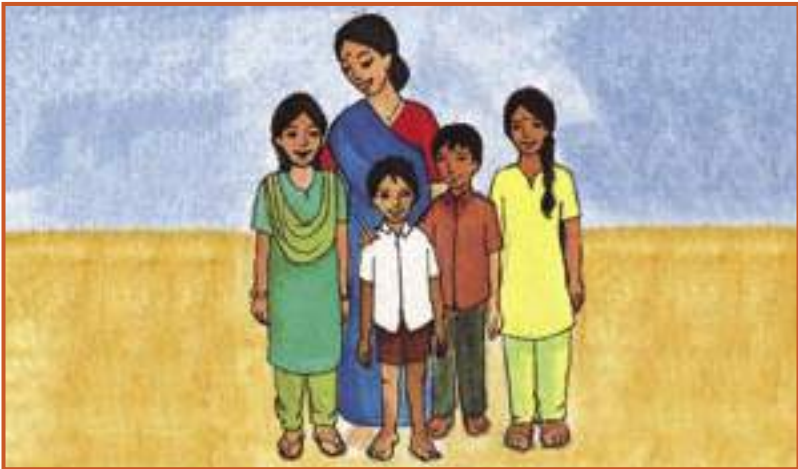
- 'Spare the rod and save childhood' should be the slogan and message for children, their parents and community at large.
- A school must have a trained counselor to help children showing signs of psychological and emotional problems and to provide necessary counseling to both the children and their parents/guardians.

- A school must have a social worker to generate positive peer response, family response and community response.
- Regular and periodic PTAs should become an essential feature. PTAs should provide a platform for dialogue between teachers and parents on the child's overall development and not just progress in class.
- Training and sensitization activities with teachers on child rights must become a regular feature just as teachers are sent for academic trainings by various schools on a regular basis.
- Fora for children's participation in matters affecting them inside the school should be created.
- Sex Education should be made an essential component of life skill education imparted in schools.
- Basic facilities like toilets and drinking water for children must be made available within the school premises. Toilets for boys and girls should be separate.
- For schools that function from a tent or a small room, adequate breaks for toilet and drinking water must form a routine.
- Disabled-friendly infrastructure and teaching-learning materials reflect on a school's sensitivity towards the disabled children. Ensure that you have it all or at least what your resources can best permit. Local resources can be mobilized to fulfill this need.

Theme based Recreational Activities in which Children can be involved.

- Discussions/debates/quiz
- Story telling
- Painting, local art (specific to the region)
- Skits/plays/theatre
- Pottery and other crafts
- Puppet making
- Face painting
- Origami
- Photography
- Picnic and Excursions
- Sports (indoor and outdoor)
- Exhibitions

- There should be no vendors in and around the school premises.
- Schools that strictly discourage employment of children for domestic work by its teachers actually establish a best practice to be followed by all in the community.
- Evolving peer groups to check drug abuse or any other form of abuse taking place within the school premise is a good practice that schools must adopt.
- Guidelines are set up and followed for disciplinary enquiries and action against teachers or other school karamcharis reportedly involved in child sexual abuse within the school premises or outside.
- Guidelines, rules and norms are laid out to deal with discrimination on grounds of gender, disability, caste, religion or HIV/AIDS reported within the school premises.
- Schools should set up a child protection monitoring unit or cell involving children, their parents, and panchayats/ municipal councils. The role of this unit could be to maintain records of children needing care and protection and to report cases of child abuse to the police or other concerned authorities.



GOOD TEACHERS ARE COSTLY, BUT BAD TEACHERS COST MORE. – BOB TALBERT