

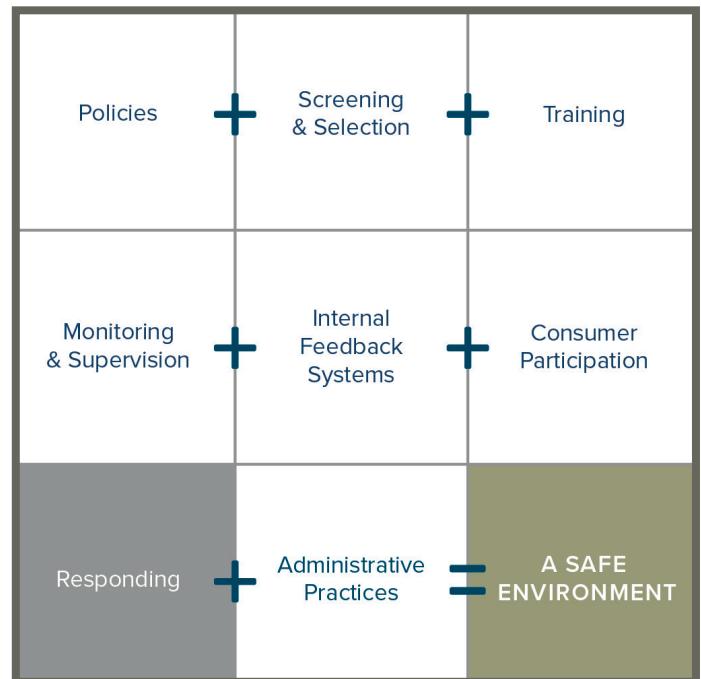
RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ABUSE

Prioritizing Transparency When Responding to Sexual Abuse

Departing from the decades-old practice of keeping reports of sexual abuse within a “need-to-know” circle of administrators, schools are now emphasizing transparency in their responses to allegations of incidents of abuse. Responding is important because it results in an immediate reactions to red-flag behaviors and to suspicions of abuse. Research and experience show us that addressing incidents directly and publicly instills trust in the organization and helps ensure future incidents do not occur.

Tips for Responding:

- Respond to tremors, not earthquakes.
- Treat “near misses” as free lessons.
- Don’t respond in isolation.
- Use a continuum of responses.



Be Compassionate.

Be Transparent.

Be Confident.

PRAESIDIUM

STEPS TO RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT OR ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

01 Activate Your Crisis Management Plan

- Ensure immediate safety of youth
- Follow mandated reporting requirements
- Notify your crisis response team

02 Gather Initial Information

- Initial fact finding
- Who, what, when, where, and how
- Determine if other victims may exist
- Close knowledge gaps between program staff and crisis response team members

03 Customize Your Communication Plan

- Identify who speaks to whom
- Develop target messaging for appropriate audiences
- Use a variety of communication methods (letters/emails to parents, media statements, parent meetings, etc.)
- Be transparent, accurate, and compassionate in all communications

04 Provide Victim Assistance

- Designate a victim assistance coordinator
- Provide resources to victims, families, and staff
- Tailor the resources to fit the needs of those affected
- Provide education information and counseling services

05 Investigate and Analyze the Incident

- Cooperate with the authorities
- Look beyond the criminal elements
- Determine what went wrong:
 - Were there policies addressing the conduct or activities at issue? Were these policies followed?
 - What was the supervision structure at the time?
 - What did others see or hear?
 - Were existing reporting and response procedures followed?