

Jumpstart Report

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Child Safety First

Closing the Gap in Best Practices for Prevention and Response to Sexual Abuse of Minors in Jewish Organizations

By Dr. Shira Berkovits

Based on a Jumpstart study of Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools conducted by Prof. Steven M. Cohen

Preface

Protecting Innocents — Our Fundamental Moral Responsibility

By Rabbi David Ingber

One could argue that the core, essential teaching of Judaism is that the ‘holy’ inheres in three dimensions of human life: sacred time, sacred space, and sacred person. In the idiom of the rabbinic tradition this is known as *olam* (world or space), *shana* (year or time), and *nefesh* (soul or person). This fundamental Jewish teaching is accompanied by another one, namely, that all holiness requires safeguarding. The sacred must be watched over and protected. The sacred requires that we be its stewards. Holiness, that which is precious and pure, demands *shmirah*, guardianship.

The Bible introduces us to each of these holy dimensions and our responsibility as *shomrim* (guardians) in the first chapters of Genesis. Sacred space is revealed in the **Garden of Eden** story: the Garden’s beauty and bounty are given to humanity for safekeeping. Sacred time is presented in the form of the **Sabbath**, a day separate from other days, made special and unique, a day set aside to honor what is most of ultimate concern. And sacred personhood is shown in the **human form**; that each of us imbued with nothing less than the Divine Imprint or Image itself. Each of us holy, unique, distinct, deserving of respect and dignity.

Views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of Jumpstart. Responsibility for the research, assessments, and opinions herein rest solely with the contributors.

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Preface continued

The Jewish community spends millions of dollars each year to protect our tradition for future generations. We spend millions of dollars each year to combat antisemitism and to guard our people from terror attacks. All important causes. However, despite the resources and attention focused on protection from these very real outside threats, there is one threat, equally real and even more insidious, a threat from *within* our community that does not get the shmirah it deserves – the threat of child sexual abuse inside Jewish institutions.

Where is the demand that every Jewish organization do everything in its power to safeguard children from sexual abuse?

Our fundamental responsibility to parents who have trusted us with the bodies and souls of their children is a pledge and promise that we are **worthy** of that trust. That we are worthy *shomrim*, that we know how to make our spaces sacred and safe. Sacred space requires sacred protection.

Though Jewish leadership should be proud of the impact we have had on issues of social justice and broader areas of shmirah, our sacred shmirah, our protection of our children is, frankly, grossly inadequate. This report shows how our lack of attention, discussion, and investment has created environments where the threat of child sexual abuse is not spoken about let alone addressed with the seriousness it demands.

The Jewish community has thus far been woefully unprepared to honor the promise to ensure all of our spaces are free from sexual predation and abuse. We must take this issue as seriously (in my opinion, more seriously) than any threat to the safety and security of those who walk through its doors. Most Jewish institutions suffer from a lack of institutional accountability, not to mention broader movement accountability structures that would demand organizational behavioral and professional training to ensure safety from sexual predation and violation. Many survivors of childhood abuse grow up in environments that are ill-equipped to provide support and counseling when, G-d forbid, something terrible occurs. Not only do we fail to prevent the preventable, we also fail those who have been victims and survivors of sexual abuse by not attending to their needs and working to heal their pain.

Children themselves need to be free, secure, and confident people as they mature into strong and caring adults.

When Cain murdered his own brother Abel, the Torah records his incredulous question, “*ha’shomer akhi anokhi?*” am I then, my brother’s protector?

(Continued on page 3)



Cain's question resounds through time and space, as we have repeatedly failed as a species to *shomer*, to watch over and protect one another and most tragically, the most innocent and the most vulnerable among us, our children.

I would like to imagine a world where children are safe, where they never need fear physical or sexual abuse, where they mature and grow in Jewish institutions that put child safety at the top of their priorities, taking responsibility for each child's physical and emotional well-being.

But where is the funding and the leadership necessary to ensure that our children, our most valuable and precious resource, are protected in our own institutions against the terror of sexual violation? Where are the community resources that must be allocated to train and equip Jewish institutions with basic knowledge and trainings on child safety? Where is the demand that every Jewish organization do everything in its power to safeguard children from sexual abuse?

The time has come for us to answer Biblical Cain's cynical and rhetorical question with our own clear call: Yes. We are *shomrim* for one another. Yes. Each child is my child and each one is my responsibility.

Childhood is meant to be a *time* of growth and safety. The organizations who care for our children are supposed to be *spaces* of community and ethical behavior. Children themselves need to be free, secure, and confident *people* as they mature into strong and caring adults. The holiness of that time, those places, and the souls of the next generation must be protected.

Our community must wake up to the dangers of child sexual abuse and its prevalence. We must train our leaders on how best to protect our children and our institutions. As someone who knows too well the tragedy and the trauma of child sexual abuse, as a rabbi, and as communal leader who focuses on infusing holiness in the spaces, moments, and people in my care, I believe that we must demand more responsibility from one another and from the broader Jewish community to protect our innocent children. The time has come for all of us to become true *shomrim*, those who watch over and protect our children.

Rabbi David Ingber is the Founder and Senior Rabbi of Romemu in NYC. Rabbi Ingber studied at various Orthodox yeshivot and seminaries before receiving a private ordination from Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, one of the Founders of Jewish Renewal. He was named by Newsweek and The Jewish Forward as one of America's top 50 rabbis and influential Jews. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Ariel and their 3 boys - Baer, Tal and Or.

I believe that we must demand more responsibility from one another and from the broader Jewish community to protect our innocent children.

Introduction

Any setting that provides regular access to minors will attract individuals seeking to sexually abuse children. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to distinguish these predatory individuals from their non-offending peers. While this risk is present in all youth-serving organizations (YSOs), the danger is compounded within religious communities because sexual predators report specifically seeking out faith-based institutions to gain access to children.¹ In the Jewish communal world this means that every synagogue, school, camp, and youth group is a potential magnet for sexual predators.

WHAT IS A YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATION (YSO)?

Any organization or program which provides services for minors, such as a school, congregation, daycare facility, after-school program, camp, youth group, or athletic team

Sexual predators target religious environments because they are places where it is easy to establish trust due to shared concepts, customs, and vocabulary. Religious organizations are filled with individuals who are warm and welcoming, quick to accept and forgive, and generally more reluctant to intervene for fear of challenging hierarchies, accusing respected leaders, or exposing institutions to harmful publicity. At times, the very warmth and openness on which the Jewish community prides itself creates easy access to children and a respectable cover for predators. As such, Jewish institutions without robust child protection programs in place may inadvertently become safe-havens for child predators.

No matter how committed an institution is to protecting its children, when faced with an instance of ongoing or historic abuse by a known and trusted individual, leaders may dismiss or forget important response steps. They can become susceptible to pressure, and, even with the best of intentions, deviate from best practice protocols. In so doing, they introduce the children under their protection to ongoing risk and their organizations to increased liability. This is when having child sexual abuse (CSA) policies and procedures becomes absolutely critical.

Jewish YSOs invest considerable energy and resources to protecting their children and staff from all kinds of safety threats. For example, adequate fire safety measures require construction of fire code compliant buildings, posted evacuation instructions, fire-safety education, and regular fire drills. Whether or not a YSO will ever deal with an actual fire, everyone agrees that these measures are absolutely necessary and worth the investment to keep children safe.

Protecting our children from sexual predators must also be standard operating procedure for Jewish organizations. Unfortunately — as this study reveals — these protections are not uniformly understood or implemented, and those efforts that exist may be insufficient to accomplish their goal of creating environments that keep children safe from sexual abuse.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA)?

Any occurrence in which an adult engages a minor in sexual activity is abusive.

Sexual activity may include but is not limited to:

- sexual contact
- sexual communication
- exposure to sexually explicit material
- voyeurism
- exhibitionism
- any activity intended to arouse or gratify sexual desires

Sexual activity between children can also be abusive; some indicators might include a significant disparity in age, development, or size; if one child is in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the other; when one child does not or cannot consent (e.g., is intoxicated); or anytime coercion is used.²

Assessments

Overview

AN ANALYSIS OF EFFORTS IN JEWISH OVERNIGHT CAMPS AND DAY SCHOOLS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Experts agree that comprehensive child protection efforts require a complete program consisting of policies, education, and implementation. To better understand how Jewish youth serving organizations grapple with child safety issues, Jumpstart created and fielded a risk management questionnaire. Jumpstart surveyed executive directors of Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools. The survey covered several areas of threat to the safety of children, including terrorism, emergencies, and CSA in order to understand responses within a broad context of institutional preparedness and risk management.

Further review of the data and consultation with funders, camp and school association leaders, as well as leading researchers and child safety advocates, has led us to a series of data-driven assessments that we believe ought to shape policy discussion and action among funders and operators of YSOs. These assessments correspond with a comprehensive framework for safety — prevention, practice, detection, and response — which applies no less to protecting children from sexual abuse than to other types of safety concerns and threats.

The responses to our survey suggest that overnight camps and day schools may have critical gaps in their anti-CSA programs. These gaps — and the organizations' lack of awareness of these gaps — create vulnerabilities that sexual predators can exploit.

Assessment I – Prevention

Across North America, Jewish day schools and Jewish overnight camps report an uneven landscape of efforts to prevent sexual abuse of minors in their care.

Assessment II – Practices

Jewish day schools and Jewish overnight camps surveyed have not uniformly adopted and implemented best practices related to preventing child sexual abuse.

Assessment III – Detection

Jewish day schools and Jewish overnight camps surveyed reported varying levels of child protection training and awareness, and a lack of clarity about who within the organization should be informed of their child protection efforts.

Assessment IV – Response

Almost all respondents indicated that their institutions have procedures in place to respond to instances of known or suspected child sexual abuse, but not all response procedures were consistent with best practices or legal requirements.

Assessment V – Risk Preparedness

When measured against what experts agree is necessary, many organizations appear unaware that their current controls alone may be insufficient to protect children from sexual abuse.





Assessment I – Prevention

Policies & Screening

Across North America, Jewish day schools and Jewish overnight camps report an uneven landscape of efforts to prevent sexual abuse of minors in their care.

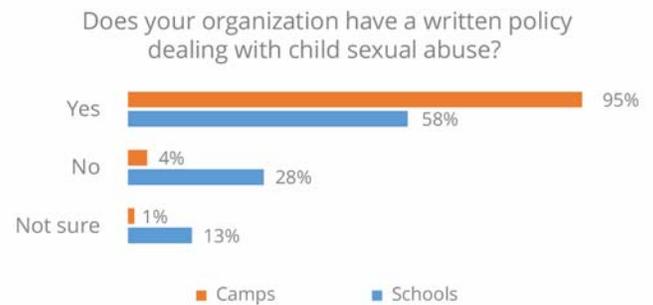
The vast majority of Jewish overnight camps and the majority of Jewish day schools report having written policies to address child sexual abuse.

However, the detail, breadth, and application of those policies are not always consistent with recognized best practices to prevent child sexual abuse.

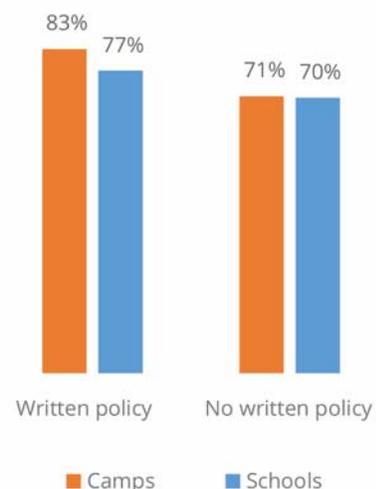
Policies

When child protection professionals refer to child protection policies, they are typically referencing documents that include clear minimum guidelines for preventing and responding to child abuse. While having a written policy was the norm in both the overnight camps and day schools surveyed (95% and 58% respectively), having a policy did not always indicate sufficient efforts to prevent and respond to CSA. In other words, respondents who reported that their organization had a policy did not always report best practice protocols, while many who do not have a policy nevertheless went on to report at least some best practice protocols. However, in the aggregate, respondents reporting that their organization had written CSA policies scored higher on a scale of adherence to best practices than those without written policies.

Child safety experts agree that consistent language and operational definitions are a requirement for effective child protection efforts. Without such clarity, institutions and parents may believe that children are protected, when in fact many standard safeguards have not been enacted.



Adherence to best practices for organizations with and without written CSA policies



WHAT TOPICS ARE INCLUDED IN A ROBUST CSA POLICY?

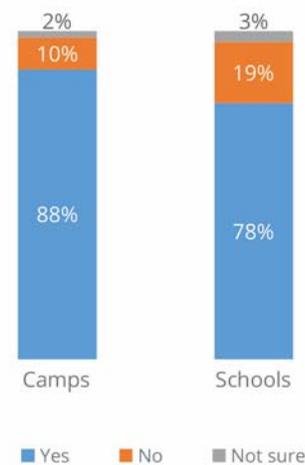
1. Screening and hiring employees and volunteers
2. Guidelines on interactions between individuals
3. Monitoring behavior
4. Ensuring safe environments
5. Responding to inappropriate behavior, breaches in policy, and allegations and suspicions of CSA
6. Training on CSA prevention.³

Screening

This problem of inconsistency in policy development is evidenced in the survey responses regarding hiring and screening practices. When asked whether their institutions “always, usually, seldom, or never” checked references when hiring adults who come in contact with minors, 100% of respondents in both camps and schools selected “always” or “usually.” Similar results were obtained when respondents were asked whether applicants interacting with youth were required to undergo a criminal background check prior to being hired (at least 95% selected “always”).

However, when asked whether they screened *volunteers* who work with youth, of the organizations that reported having such volunteers, 12% of camps and 22% of schools selected “no” or “not sure.” Best practices require that *anyone* interacting with youth in an official capacity — whether paid or unpaid — be subject to thorough screening procedures. The fact that individuals volunteer their time to an organization does not make them safer than individuals who are compensated. In fact, a predator looking for an opportunity to abuse a child, would seek the easiest point of entry. A volunteer position that provides access to children, but limits the anti-abuse safeguards typically in place with paid positions, is one such entry point.

Does your organization perform any screening process for volunteers who have contact with minors?



Assessment II – Practices

Interaction Rules & Procedures

Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools surveyed have not uniformly adopted and implemented best practices related to preventing child sexual abuse.

Despite broad adoption of written child sexual abuse policies, the content of those policies, and the procedures required by them are not always consistent with best practices to prevent incidents.

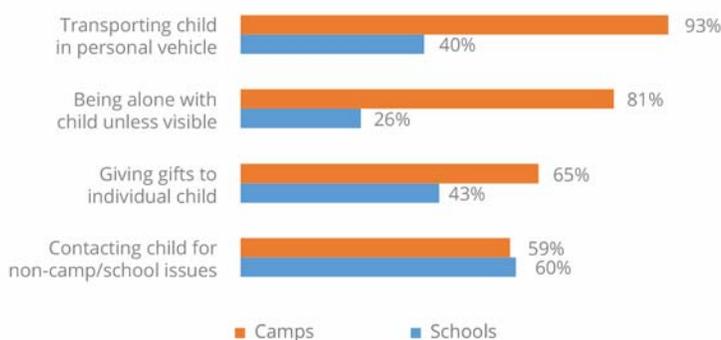
Their apparent gaps range from policies on how adults may interact with children, to knowledge of proper reporting procedures and awareness of the legal requirements for reporting.

Gaps in protective measures exist both in organizations that have written policies and those that do not. In some areas, such as screening measures for new staff hires (see Assessment I above), the institutions report fairly high rates of compliance with widely recognized best practices. However, in other areas, such as protecting children from currently employed staff and volunteers, the responses are more uneven.

For instance, despite indicating that they had rules in place, only a minority of schools prohibited staff from being alone with a child unless visible to others, or prohibited transporting children in their personal vehicles — safeguards typically considered basic standards in policies to

prevent CSA. Similarly, a substantial number of both camps and schools were either unsure of their protocols, or indicated that the institution permitted staff to: give gifts to individual children, and contact the child for issues unrelated to camp or school — all of which are typically prohibited in child protection policies because they present perpetrators with the ideal conditions in which to groom a child for later sexual abuse. Questions about these interaction rules were included based upon child safety best practices. Even at organizations where some of these interactions may not be regulated, let alone banned, it is important that policies and practices take child safety into account and clearly limit the potential for grooming or abuse.

Prohibited interactions between adults and children



WHAT IS GROOMING?

A set of seemingly innocent behaviors, or sometimes red-flag behaviors, that a child abuser might use to gain the trust and cooperation of a child, the child's family, and even an entire institution or community, for his or her own eventual sexual gratification.

Assessment III – Detection

Training & Awareness

Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools surveyed reported varying levels of child protection training and awareness, and a lack of clarity about who within the organization should be informed of their child protection efforts.

Respondents reported sharing child safety information and training most commonly with staff, less so with children, and hardly ever with parents.

Schools and camps may believe they are protecting children by developing policies to prevent and respond to CSA, however, if these policies are not widely disseminated and understood, they will be of limited value.

Staff

Although most respondents indicated that their organizations provide some training to staff on how to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of CSA, only 57% of camps and 17% of schools felt that their staff were trained to “a great extent.”

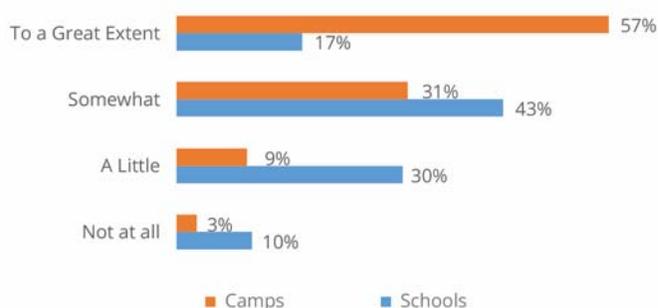
Children

Close to 40% of respondents indicated that their organizations did not, or were unsure of whether they did, provide any education on inappropriate touching or behavior to children. Educating children about the policies, safe and unsafe touching, and interaction guidelines is critical to empowering children with the knowledge necessary to insist on respect for their boundaries or to get help when someone violates them. Children cannot ask for help if they do not even know that certain behaviors or touch are wrong.

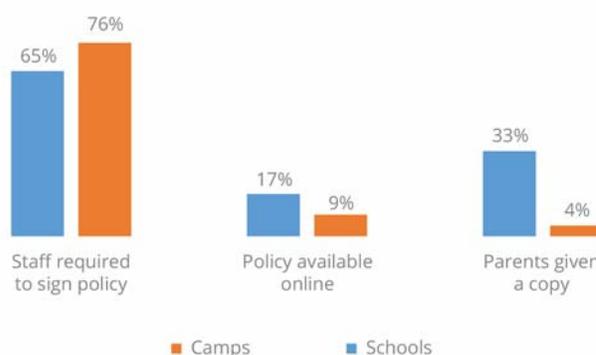
Parents

Though training and awareness of child safety were far from ideal levels for staff and children, survey responses indicated that parents receive the least information from camps and schools of all three groups. The majority of camps and schools report disseminating the policy to staff and requiring them to sign it, yet few distribute a copy of the policy to parents or make the policy publicly available online.

To what extent does your organization train staff in how to prevent, identify, and respond to incidents of child sexual abuse?



Distribution of CSA Policy



Assessment IV – Response

Reporting

Almost all respondents indicated that their institutions have procedures in place to respond to instances of known or suspected child sexual abuse, but not all response procedures were consistent with best practices or legal requirements.

Jewish overnight camps were more likely to have procedures in place for responding to instances of child sexual abuse than were Jewish day schools.

However camps' response procedures tended to emphasize reporting internally within the organization rather than externally to government authorities – a prioritization that is inconsistent with best practices in child protection.

Nearly all camps (97%) indicated that they have procedures in place to respond to CSA, compared with 88% of schools. Yet the response procedures in camps were more likely to require reporting within the institution to a designated administrator than to require reporting to an external governmental agency.

Internal reports serve a critical function in placing the YSO on notice of potential child safety concerns so that they can take immediate action, but industry-wide best practice, and state laws, dictate that any internal reporting requirement be accompanied by clear external reporting requirements.⁴ This is because the majority of CSA cases that come to the attention of staff, will not present as clear abuse with demonstrable proof, but as potential indicators of abuse.

Authorities who receive external reports are trained to investigate and understand the compli-

cated dynamics of CSA cases. Institutional heads are not equipped with this expertise, and those who try to handle suspected cases internally risk obfuscating evidence, missing important clues, interfering with witness testimony, and potentially covering up abuse (see “Inadvertent Cover-Ups” in the *Creating Cultures of Safety* section, p.16). This is why mandatory reporting laws require the reporting of all reasonable suspicions of abuse.

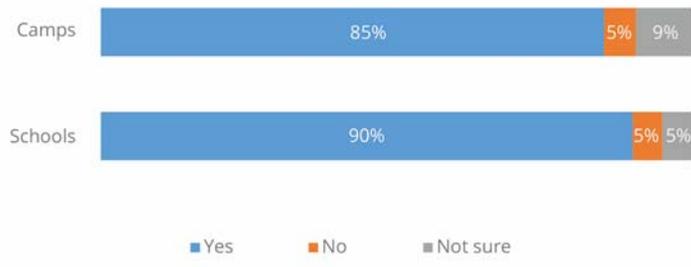
The difference reported by camps in requiring internal versus external reports may be partly due to differences in mandated reporting laws, which vary from state to state.⁵ Directors of Jewish camps and schools are legally obligated to understand their states' reporting laws, but among survey respondents, almost 15% of camp directors and 10% of school directors indicated that they did not or were unsure of whether they understood these laws.



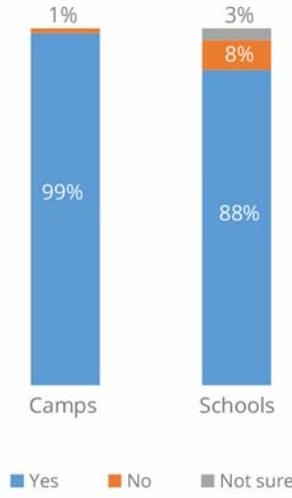
WHAT ARE MANDATED REPORTING LAWS?

All 50 states require that professionals who work with children report reasonable suspicions of abuse to a child protection agency. In 18 states, any adult with a reasonable suspicion is legally required to report it. However, in some states only certain individuals within a YSO are mandated reporters while others are not. Despite this legal exemption, a youth professional that suspects or becomes aware of abuse has a moral, professional, and halakhic obligation to ensure the safety of the abused child and protect other children from future harm by reporting the abuse to the proper authorities.

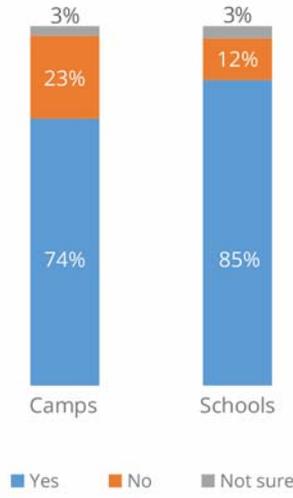
Do you feel that you know and understand the legal requirements in your state for reporting suspected child sexual abuse?



Does your organization require staff to report suspected abuse to a designated individual in the administration?



Does your organization require staff to report suspected abuse to the relevant, outside governmental agency?



Assessment V – Risk Preparedness

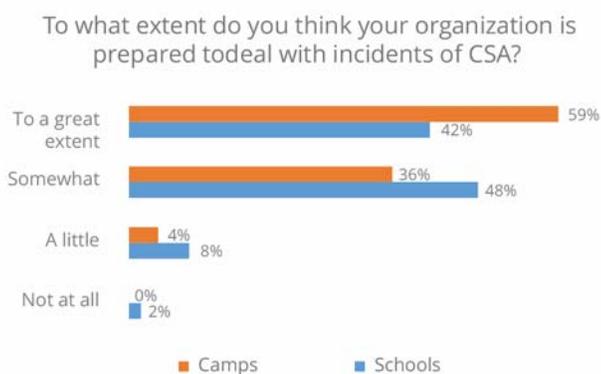
Perception vs. Reality

When measured against what experts agree is necessary, many organizations appear unaware that their current controls alone may be insufficient to protect children from sexual abuse.

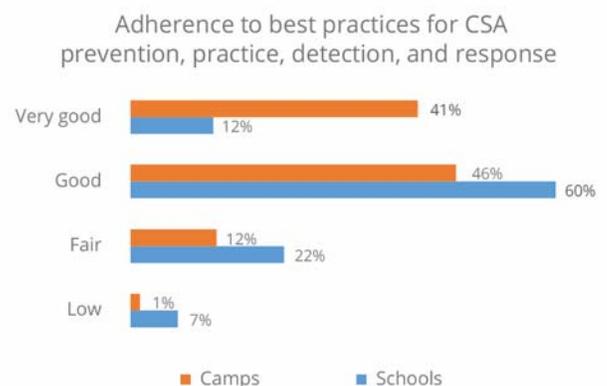
Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools report greater levels of preparedness in handling incidents of child sexual abuse than their current procedures indicate may be warranted.

95% of Jewish overnight camps and 90% of Jewish day schools believe that they are greatly or somewhat prepared to deal with incidents of CSA. However, this confidence may be somewhat optimistic, especially for schools, given that 13% of camps and nearly 30% of schools scored “low” or only “fair” in adherence to best practices of prevention (screening measures), detection (education and staff training), practice (interaction guidelines) and response (reporting) to CSA, as underscored by the gaps noted in the Assessments above. Effective efforts to address CSA require that organizations focus on all four components of a comprehensive CSA safety framework (see following section: *Comprehensive Safety Frameworks*), and that they seek expert advice to ensure their protocols in these areas are consistent with industry-wide best practice standards.

Perception



Reality



Comprehensive Safety Frameworks

A 360° Method to Build Safer Youth Serving Organizations

In 1998, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) published a groundbreaking study on Adverse Childhood Experiences in which one out of every five adults surveyed reported being sexually abused before the age of 18.⁶ These staggering statistics were initially met with skepticism by the public, including by some Jewish communal leaders. Today, we know that child sexual abuse occurs across religions, cultures, and socioeconomic status. Therefore it is critical that leaders of Jewish YSOs such as schools, camps, and synagogues proactively adopt comprehensive safety measures to protect children from abuse, rather than find themselves forced to do so in the aftermath of a crisis.

Safety is a product of comprehensive efforts to minimize risk, train staff, detect threats, and respond effectively. Regardless of the specific threat, these four elements remain constant.

1. Prevention

2. Practice

3. Detection

4. Response

Fire Safety Framework



Security Safety Framework



CSA Safety Framework



All elements in a given safety framework are of critical importance, but individually or without all four in place, these elements provide insufficient protection.

Robust protection from any type of threat requires a full-systems approach, or the institution remains exposed. For instance, smoke detectors detect smoke, but without fire extinguishers, a YSO must wait for the fire department to put out the fire – a delay that could mean dangerous escalation of a previously manageable situation.

The same principle applies to security safety and even more so to CSA safety, since those who sexually abuse children in YSOs are already within an institution, aware of its weak spots, and on the lookout for opportunities to exploit them.

CSA Safety Frameworks Elements

Prevention



Effective risk mitigation dictates that YSOs develop policies to prevent abuse, including screening measures and interaction guidelines for all who work or volunteer with minors. Such policies should be informed by the unique risks an institution faces, best-practices, expert consultation, and reviewed on a regular basis.

Policies

A policy is about much more than simply stating for the record the formal operating and behavioral protocols of the YSO. Used correctly, a good policy creates a culture of child protection throughout the entire institution. A strong child protection policy includes a values statement expressing the institution's commitment to child safety; definitions of child abuse; staff and volunteer engagement, screening, and hiring practices; training requirements; a code of conduct that includes guidelines on touching, staff-child ratios, transportation, language and communication, photography, alcohol and drugs, relationships, and other boundaries; internal and external reporting procedures; mechanisms for ensuring policy compliance and responding to policy violations; communication with constituents regarding child safety; requirements for ongoing expert review and revisions to the policy; specific commitments for supporting victims; and designation of individuals or a committee to oversee implementation of the policy and other child safety measures in the institution.

Hiring & Screening

Best practice screening policies require all prospective employees and volunteers to fill out written applications, submit to background and reference checks, and participate in in-person interviews, before they have access to children. These screenings will catch child predators who have a criminal record or are obvious in their predatory intent, and as such are considered basic minimum precautions. Most child predators though do not fall into these two categories, and so will not be identified in screenings, no matter how thorough they are. Despite this, screenings serve several preventative functions, in that they may yield valuable information that enables a YSO to gauge whether applicants retain beliefs or exhibit behaviors that could place children at risk, or whether applicants can be relied upon to follow the policy, report suspected abuse, and remain alert to potential threats against children. Further, in many instances, predators seek employment at YSOs that provide easy access to children; YSOs with thorough screening policies indicate that they are not such a place. Even the most comprehensive screening procedures will be unable to identify the vast majority of child abusers and should never be relied on as a primary means of protecting children. Still, screening measures are an important component of a child protection policy in that they help identify the most egregious or known offenders and may serve as a potential deterrent, indicating that the organization is serious about child protection and will not tolerate abuse.

Practice



Practice means implementing the prevention and response policies on the ground in daily operations and applying them equally to all those who interact with children, regardless of their position.

When YSOs ensure that the procedures and guidelines outlined in the policy are implemented, they create a culture of child protection throughout the entire institution.

This requires that the physical premises of a YSO promote a safe environment, that staff and children understand and abide by interaction guidelines, and that protocols for identifying and responding to policy violations or suspicions of abuse are closely followed.

Interaction Rules & Procedures

Rules clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors that guide individuals to model safe interactions with children. This guidance removes ambiguity and frees staff and children to interact more naturally and comfortably, thereby increasing nurturing interactions that are critical to children's healthy development. Non-offending adults who follow these policies help to create a culture of safety that educates children about what to expect in safe interactions with others. They also prevent opportunities for abuse and thus protect children from harm and the institution from liability. Finally, beyond protecting children from individuals within the institution, interaction rules may deter predators scouting YSOs in which to operate by alerting them that an institution takes child protection seriously.

Detection



For YSOs to be able to detect abuse when it occurs, they must be alert to warning signs, recognizing indicators of abuse in children and concerning behaviors in potential predators. This recognition is developed through trainings and conversations with all members of the institution, including staff and volunteers, lay leaders, parents, and children.

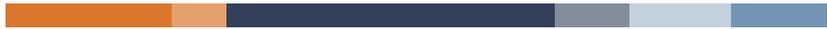
Training & Awareness

Training is a key component in shaping child-protection attitudes and behaviors in a YSO. Such trainings include dissemination and explanation of the child protection policy. Even the most comprehensive state-of-the-art policy cannot protect children if it is not accompanied by quality training. All adults who are responsible for caring for minors must understand:

- how abusers operate
- which situations are inherently risky
- which children are especially vulnerable
- how to identify indicators of abuse
- how to report indicators of abuse, policy violations, or other concerning behaviors

By educating all staff, volunteers, lay leaders, parents, and children, an organization creates a culture of awareness that allows for early detection of concerning behavior. Such early detection provides the institution with the opportunity to intervene and protect children immediately, before the behavior escalates.





Response



When a YSO is faced with allegations of abuse, boundary violations, or policy noncompliance, the organization should respond in a manner that complies with the letter and spirit of the law (i.e. mandated reporting and full cooperation with governmental investigations), prevents further abuse or misconduct (i.e. hiring external experts to conduct independent investigations when necessary and limiting violators' access to children), and supports any children who have been victimized (i.e. therapeutic and pastoral support).

Reporting

The only thing necessary for the perpetuation of CSA is for those who know of its occurrence to remain silent. The vast majority of children who are sexually abused do not disclose the abuse.⁷ Thus those who suspect abuse must intervene and report on their behalf. Unfortunately, research shows that adults, including mandated reporters, are hesitant to report even clear evidence of child abuse.⁸ Child abusers confidently rely on this silence to escape justice and continue perpetrating abuse against children (see *How Cultures of Silence Enable Sexual Abuse*, p.24). Reporting a colleague, communal leader, friend or family member is not an easy task. If the subject of the report has done nothing wrong, the

child protection agency will close the case. If the individual has abused a child, then the report is necessary to save the child from further abuse and to protect other children. Individuals who use their positions of authority to sexually abuse children betray the trust of the entire community; they need to face the consequences of their actions.

Victim Support

When a YSO learns that a child has been abused, it must do more than report the abuse and physically protect the victim. The organization also has a responsibility to tend to the child's emotional and spiritual wellbeing. YSOs can support children's healing and resiliency by believing and immediately acting on disclosures; assisting families in accessing quality mental health treatment; coordinating pastoral counseling with trained, caring clergy; accompanying families to meetings with government officials or court; and standing up for victims should individuals in the community begin disparaging or attempting to discredit them or their families. In cases where a child is abused in the YSO or by a representative of the YSO, the YSO should offer unequivocal public and private apologies. These situations are every YSO's worst nightmare, but YSOs that respond compassionately can help a child heal and tend to fare better in the long-run.⁹

A Protective Perimeter Demands Vigilance

Require Comprehensive Education & Training

Child protection education must be disseminated and instituted at all levels of the YSO. Policies may require embracing new procedures that affect longstanding camp or school traditions. Before expecting shifts in behavior, the entire school or camp community needs to understand why they are being asked to think and act in new ways. Individuals who have not previously considered child safety may be unaware of the risks and resistant to change. Others who have thought about the issue but never received any formal training may not understand the necessity of the new protocols. **Educating all members of the school or camp community on the terms of the policy and how to prevent, detect, and respond to child abuse, generates buy-in and equips adults with the tools to protect children.**

Maintain Policy Standards

YSOs rarely catch individuals sexually abusing a child; but they do catch them violating child-protection policies. A robust CSA policy forms a protective perimeter, but this perimeter is only as strong as the organization's vigilance in enforcement. When a policy is violated, the leadership must take the violation seriously and respond. The violations may simply be the result of poor judgment or carelessness, but they may also be indicative of nefarious intent. Policy guidelines provide the YSO the freedom to respond without needing to determine the motivation of the

offending individual. Instead, the YSO can insist on compliance, just as it would for any other institutional policy, and thus avoid entanglement in divisive questions of intent.

If someone witnesses a breach of policy, they may only be observing the tip of the iceberg. **Taking these small breaches seriously allows the camp or school to intervene at the early warning signs; waiting for clear signs of abuse means that they have waited too long.**

Legal Requirements Are a First Step

When a YSO has a reasonable suspicion of abuse, its first responsibility is to comply with the law. Such compliance includes immediate reporting to the relevant authorities and full cooperation with legal investigations. According to CEO of CHILD USA, Marci Hamilton, "every adult who suspects a child is being sexually abused must report it to the authorities before reporting it to the organization — whether or not the relevant state's law requires it." Beyond legal compliance though, the YSO will need to take additional steps to keep children safe and supported. This means communicating with children's families about known risks or abuse, limiting potential perpetrators' access to children, hiring external experts to conduct independent investigations when necessary (e.g., if an historic allegation emerges that is past the statute of limitations), and providing therapeutic and other support to children who have been abused.

Avoid Inadvertent Cover-ups

One way that inadvertent cover-ups occur is when institutions are made aware of indicators of abuse, but determine that they do not warrant an external report. Later, it may be revealed that the child was being abused and the institution was on notice of warning signs. In hindsight everyone wonders how the institution could have neglected to protect the child, but the institution, which was waiting for clear signs of abuse and reluctant to report “mere indicators,” simply did not understand what it was seeing or the responsibility it had to report. **Policies must be clear that if there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse, it should be reported to the authorities, and staff members should never be discouraged from filing a report — a policy that is law in 17 states.**¹⁰

Intervene Early

Just as a teacher who regularly comes 30 minutes late to class would not be permitted to continue teaching that class, so, too, one who violates child protection policies must face the consequences. If the habitually late teacher is fired, it would not be because he or she is bad at teaching — in fact s/he might be an outstanding educator — but instead because s/he is unreliable. **An individual who violates a child protection policy is not assumed to be a child abuser but merely someone who cannot be counted on to uphold policies that help keep children safe.** Enforcing a violation of a policy is not an accusation or assumption of intent; it is simply upholding the standards of the camp or school.

ELEMENTS OF A CHILD SAFE ORGANIZATION

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse lists 10 elements of a child-safe organization¹¹ consistent with the principles outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Chief among these elements is the need for awareness of child safety and involvement in the organization’s child safety efforts from individuals at every level of the organization, including families, children, and staff.

This means that all parties must be intimately familiar with the policies, trained in these policies, and understand the clear transparent mechanisms for filing complaints in the event of policy violations.

Even the best child protection policy can only help protect children if it is well communicated and properly implemented.

Conclusion

Though many Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools may be ready and willing, they are not necessarily able to effectively prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. A lack of sufficient knowledge, resources, and urgency can cause an organization to fall short of best practices and result in a compromised safety environment. Gaps in a safety framework may not reflect a lack of seriousness, or attempts to do the right thing. Rather, a lack of awareness may be the result of each YSO working on their own without expert help to develop safeguards to protect children in their care from sexual abuse. Certainly Jewish leaders entrusted with caring for our children want to do everything possible to protect them from sexual predators. But without a robust communal conversation about what that entails — and input from child safety experts — organizations are isolated and unaware of current best practices. This is unfortunate and unnecessary, as best practice standards do exist, and there are numerous resources available to improve child safety.

As with many other uncomfortable subjects, the issue of preventing CSA has not gotten the attention it deserves because it has not been elevated to the highest levels of communal discourse. This is understandable, given the nature of the problem, but unacceptable, given the risk posed. Safety from threats — internal and external — requires open discussion, coordinated efforts, and expert guidance. When a topic garners a high level of visibility and concern, the community can more intentionally supply the necessary resources and knowledge to remedy

the situation. By adopting comprehensive safety frameworks, institutions can enhance protections and intervene responsibly should abuse occur, regardless of the identity of the alleged perpetrator. This preparedness is recognized as such a critical first step that many insurance companies require written CSA policies as a prerequisite for insurance coverage.¹² Effective risk management and mitigation requires considering all the threats to our children's safety regardless of the source. In recent years the threat from terrorism has caused a sea change in how Jewish organizations treat security issues in order to prevent and respond to the risks of active shooters and bomb threats. While those threats are both real and serious, their actual occurrence is nowhere near the prevalence of CSA.

Collectively, community organizations spend millions of dollars on Jewish engagement and empowering the next generation of Jewish leaders. However, before we can discuss a Jewish future, we must discuss a Jewish present, and that present has a serious problem. Thousands of victims of institutional abuse have silently fled the Jewish community, not because they were deprived of Jewish programming, but because those very programs led to irreparable harm when trusted leaders failed to protect them from abuse. The questions for our future leaders go beyond passion and commitment; they demand safety, morality, and justice. We must create cultures of child safety that permeate our YSOs and our community as a whole. By acknowledging and addressing CSA today we help assure a vibrant Jewish tomorrow.



Myths vs. Reality: What Isn't Understood About Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse

Myth: Acknowledging and discussing the issue of child sexual abuse might frighten parents or cause them to believe that this issue is a particular problem for the organization.

Reality: Child sexual abuse occurs in all communities and is relevant to all institutions that work with children. One of the first steps to creating a culture of safety is to engage stakeholders in the conversation and seek their participation in institutional abuse-prevention efforts. Rather than assuaging fears by avoiding the topic, institutions that refrain from communicating with parents send a message — potentially inaccurate — that they haven't spent time addressing the issue. Parents increasingly select institutions that acknowledge the problem head-on and can communicate concrete steps they have taken to prevent and respond to sexual abuse.

Myth: It is developmentally inappropriate or immodest to speak to children about their bodies, sex, safe boundaries, and abusive touch.

Reality: Age-appropriate education should be informative and empowering, not scary. The fact is, children who do not learn about their bodies and sex from parents and teachers, will still receive this education from peers or online. Institutions and parents can partner to frame information in a manner that is accurate and developmentally sound rather than leave children to figure it out for themselves. In addition, predators report specifically seeking out children who are uneducated or naïve, so that they can “educate” them themselves.¹³ Though children should never be expected to defend themselves from abusive advances by older, stronger, more sophisticated individuals, educating children allows them to recognize boundary violations and unacceptable behaviors when they see them. Research shows that children who receive abuse-prevention education are more likely to disclose sexual abuse and receive the help they need.¹⁴

Myth: Children will tell us if something bad happens to them. The fact that we have not received any disclosures of child sexual abuse in our camp or school indicates that this is not an issue here.

Reality: Children are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse.¹⁵ When abuse is perpetrated by an individual within an institution who is in a position of responsibility, many children keep their silence for a decade or more.¹⁶ In fact, not only do most children conceal their abuse, but when questioned, they will deny its occurrence and protect their abusers, for fear of not being believed, of getting into trouble, of being hurt, or of losing someone — often the perpetrator — whom they care about.¹⁷

Myth: Children frequently lie; their reports of sexual abuse by trusted wonderful people are simply manifestations of this tendency.

Reality: Children rarely lie about being sexually abused, while abusers almost always lie to cover their abusive behaviors.¹⁸ The overwhelming truthfulness of children can be explained by the dynamics of the abuse itself; it is far easier for a child to lie by denying the occurrence of abuse than to lie by providing the intimate details necessary to allege sexual abuse. Children must overcome tremendous pressure, and even threats, to disclose abuse. Abusers, on the other hand, have nothing to lose and everything to gain by denying the abuse and painting the children as liars. Unfortunately, because child victims are far less articulate, possess fewer civil and social rights, and are not nearly as powerful, their disclosures, when they do occur, are often dismissed.

Recommendations

To protect children from abuse, institutions must commit to the creation of cultures that promote children's rights and well-being, and emphasize child safety. Such cultures can only be created with the active participation of all stakeholders and constituents.

Professionals

The development and implementation of a complete CSA Safety Framework is most successful when overseen by a specially designated child safety committee or hired child safety officer.

1. Coordinate training for all members of your YSO, including lay leaders, staff, volunteers, parents, and children.
2. Consult with expert advisors to conduct a safe-building assessment and develop a comprehensive child protection policy.
3. Ensure that the policy is implemented in daily operations and that compliance with the policy is strictly enforced.
4. Take child safety concerns seriously and respond immediately and transparently in accordance with your policy and the law.

Lay Leaders

Institutions look to lay leaders to set the tone on where the institution stands on important issues.

1. Recruit a child safety committee to set standards for both staff and volunteers; volunteer to chair the committee.
2. Begin training on child safety with your board, so that the necessary stakeholders can learn about and commit to this issue.
3. Support child safety efforts in organizations where you volunteer by organizing around the issue and building support with other leaders.

Funders

Funders should use their leverage and power to shift the culture of an entire institution to make it safer.

1. Collaborate with local or national anti-abuse organizations to raise awareness in your local Jewish community and lobby for systemic change.
2. Start a designated fund at organizations you support to address child safety (e.g., pay for adequate training and prevention).
3. Take the Child Safety Pledge and make your charitable donations contingent on compliance with best-practice standards in child protection. Learn more at childsafetypledge.org.

Parents

When parents demand YSOs undertake comprehensive child protection measures, institutions respond.

1. Ask your YSO to speak publicly about child safety, and request access to their policy and details on their trainings.
2. Before sending your child to a YSO, inquire if allegations or suspicions of abuse have occurred and if so, how they were handled.
3. Insist that your YSO provide a clear mechanism for reporting child safety concerns, and that they communicate any current or historic child safety concerns that arise with the parent body.

Children

When we educate children, we help them practice and recognize safe behavior in others, so teach them that:

1. Each person's body is their own, and they have the right to decide if someone may touch them. If anyone touches you when you don't want them to, you can say 'stop', even to an adult. Similarly, don't touch others when they don't want to be touched.
2. Adults should not ask you to keep a secret from your parents; if they do, tell them you will not, and then tell a trusted adult.
3. Check with the adult in charge before going anywhere with anyone or accepting a gift of any kind.
4. Make a list of 5 trusted adults to turn to if you have a problem. If something happens and you feel scared, confused, or need help, tell one of these adults and keep telling until one of them helps you. You can also ask a teacher or counselor. You will not get in trouble, even if you or someone else broke your safety rules.

Portrait of a Predator: Serial Sexual Abusers are Persistent and Cunning

Predators Work Hard to Gain Access

Individuals who sexually abuse children are not all the same. Some are serial offenders, who expertly manipulate their environments to create opportunities for sexual abuse and then abuse at a high frequency.¹⁹ These sexual predators do not end up in YSOs by accident; they work hard to get there. Other offenders are situational or opportunistic, sexually abusing children impulsively if the situation presents itself or if they are in an institution where child safeguards are weak.¹⁹ We should not be surprised to learn that sexual predators operate inside YSOs, instead we must understand the inherent attraction and access that YSOs have for them.

Detection is Difficult

Threats posed by external agents in active shooter or bomb threat situations are easy to conceptualize. These individuals have obvious criminal intent and seek to harm the children within. The threat they pose is clear and unambiguous. Those who seek to sexually abuse children, on the other hand, are far less obvious. They tend to be people we know and trust, individuals who operate from within the institution, using seemingly normal, public interactions with children as a springboard for later, private abuse. Detecting child sexual abusers is hard — they do not carry an obvious weapon — and it may take a long time until their abusive actions are discov-

ered, if they are discovered at all. When they are detected, institutional heads, and indeed entire communities, have a hard time coming to terms with the fact that a person so well-respected could have caused such unthinkable pain. In many cases, well-intentioned people rally to support the perpetrator, certain that he or she is the victim of a false accusation.

Predators are Often the Most Trusted Leaders

Comprehensive CSA Safety Frameworks should be applied across the board, as there is no prototype of an individual who sexually abuses children.²⁰ In fact, it is not uncommon for individuals who sexually abuse children to intentionally situate themselves at the center of the community, as selfless, learned, moral leaders, precisely in order to gain access to victims, deflect suspicion, and make it likely that any allegations that eventually emerge will be dismissed out of hand.

Identify Red Flag Behavior

Though we cannot identify a child sexual abuser simply by looking at one, we can be on the lookout for behaviors that are red-flags in any adult (e.g., violating child protection policies, seeking opportunities to be secluded with children, or showing excessive interest in children or a specific child) and understand that perpetrators excel at selecting vulnerable or disadvantaged children to sexually abuse (e.g., disabled children,

children in foster care, children who have previously been maltreated, or children who are emotionally needy, insecure, or isolated).

Offenders Test Limits

Sexual predators often test a YSO's protective perimeter with small policy violations. An organization's response to a violation — whether to dismiss it as a low-level concern or to address it immediately — may determine the predator's next steps. Swift responses also establish the organizational culture around the policy: the policy is not just a formality, but a value the community takes seriously. Institutions that do not enforce their policies will have fewer early indicators that something is wrong, and may only become aware of a problem after a child is harmed.

Predators Are Patient

Individuals who sexually abuse children do not ordinarily start with abuse. Rather, they engage in a set of seemingly innocent behaviors, called grooming, to gain the trust and cooperation of their victims, their victims' families, and even entire communities.²² Awareness of these and other factors about how perpetrators operate can help YSOs decrease opportunities for abuse and reduce incidents, enable early identification of abuse or grooming, and facilitate an immediate response when indicators of abuse present themselves.

We Have To Talk

How Cultures of Silence Enable Sexual Abuse

By Guila Benchimol

Discussions about sexual abuse in the Jewish community are often disregarded or even stifled. Our fears and anxieties around speaking up sometimes prevent us from doing so. Undeniably, there are sometimes painful consequences to having difficult conversations. But one of the main ways to get past our discomfort is to have frank discussions about sensitive issues and encouraging others to do the same. In other words, to change a culture of silence we must normalize conversations about difficult topics. Child sexual abuse is one of those topics.

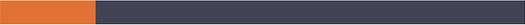
The Jewish community has a history of silence around sexual abuse. Silence persists across the Jewish continuum regardless of movement affiliation, albeit in different ways. Research shows that religious groups frequently respond to sexual abuse by simply not discussing it. When it happens in churches, sociologist Nancy Nason-Clark calls it “a holy hush.” When sexual abuse is uncovered in Jewish communal institutions, questions about culpability and responsibility arise both for our leaders and for the entire community. Moreover, many leaders have demonstrated that they do not know how to simultaneously deal with perpetrators who are members of the community and adequately support victims and survivors. This confusion is underpinned by the absence of open discussions about abuse which makes these incidents difficult to address as well as prevent. The continued silence is often a sign that victims and survivors are not being offered the help they need or want. This failure is critical because survivors often say that while the abuse they experienced was traumatic, the way they were treated when they disclosed their victimization to others traumatized them further – some say even worse than the abuse itself. When they do come forward, we often excuse the behavior of the perpetrator and instead question that of the victims. This reinforces the culture of silence and victim-blaming which fractures the entire community.

Sexual violence is one of the most underreported crimes; in religious communities it is especially so. Saying “it does not happen here” is one of the most common ways we shut down the discussion. When this happens and victims and survivors want to speak about their experiences, they have no one to turn to for help. To build safe communities we must speak openly about the safety of children and make sure that every member of the community feels responsible for, and becomes actively involved in, keeping children safe. This is not solely the job of the expert or leader – everyone has a role to play. That is why these discussions must include parents, lay leaders, professionals, volunteers, and even children themselves.

The resistance to talking to children about sexual abuse reflects our reluctance to talk about sexuality at all, which makes it challenging to address this particular form of abuse. Adult survivors of CSA report that one of the reasons they did not come forward at the time of the abuse was that they lacked the language and understanding to talk about their experiences. Children must be informed in order to protect themselves. This requires substantive education about their bodies, touch, healthy relationships, and consent, as well as

(Continued on page 25)





a CSA awareness and prevention program. Curricula should be designed to provide children with the tools and vocabulary they need to speak up for themselves and their peers.

Adults, too, face a similar problem in lacking the vocabulary to discuss the abuse that occurs inside Jewish communities and institutions. Sometimes, we respond with problematic speech as a way to pretend that we are having much needed conversations when we aren't. For example, we can use speech to inaccurately define abuse or use imprecise vocabulary, such as euphemisms or metaphors to discuss it (e.g. saying “took advantage of” instead of “sexually abused”). Vague terms and instructions that leave people confused are a disservice to the entire community and create an unsafe environment. When we speak in euphemisms, we minimize the seriousness of the crime and dismiss the responsibility of the perpetrator or institution. This can allow them both to escape accountability since unclear language changes the perception of whether a crime has actually occurred. If we erase criminality and sexual violence when we talk about abuse, we make the pursuit of further action, such as whistle-blowing or reporting, seemingly unnecessary. Negating the fact that abuse is a criminal act allows us to continue pretending that it does not happen in our community, or that we somehow can deal with abuse on our own. Clear and precise language can help keep our communities better informed, more accountable, and ultimately safer.

Silence makes it difficult to recognize and understand the ramifications of abuse, not just to the victims and survivors but to the entire community, which leads to denial. In *The Elephant in the Room*, Eviatar Zerubavel explains that denial is a deliberate act involving simultaneous awareness and unawareness which is the result of collective and individual efforts. To deny something we usually banish it from our senses – we become blind, deaf or mute to the issue. Denial distorts reality and exacerbates problems by ensuring they are neither confronted nor resolved. By confronting our denial and instituting robust sexual abuse awareness and prevention programs, we can break our individual and collective silence and protect children rather than perpetrators.

Sexual abuse in the Jewish community may be invisible because people do not know what to do after being victimized or are too afraid to seek out the authorities. It can also remain invisible when, other than the perpetrator and victim, no one else knows that sexual abuse has occurred. But all too often, the culture of silence, which we create, protects sexual predators and fails the members of our community whom they abuse. Sexual predators rely upon this silence, our silence, to evade detection and prosecution and continue their abuse. Instead of being actively complicit through our silence, let us change the conditions in our community that allow abuse to happen. This is only the beginning of the conversation.

Guila Benchimol has an MA Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy and is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociological Criminology at the University of Guelph. Her research focuses on sexual violence as well as on crimes committed in the Orthodox Jewish community by and against community members. Guila is a research assistant at the Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence and is a Wexner Graduate Fellow/Davidson Scholar.

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Methodology

The data in this report, and the assessments based on them, are from a study conducted over a one-month period during February and March 2016. The goal of the research was to gain a greater understanding of how Jewish youth serving organizations address threats to children through policies, procedures, and training. The study sought to determine the extent to which Jewish organizations prepare, prevent, and manage risk to children. Topics included active shooters, bomb threats, large-scale medical emergencies, and child sexual abuse (CSA).

Respondents were the executive directors of Jewish overnight camps and Jewish day schools. Jumpstart worked in partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) and RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network (now part of Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools) to reach potential respondents. The research team is indebted to FJC CEO Jeremy Fingerman and former RAVSAK Executive Director Marc Kramer for their assistance and consultation.

Links to the thirty-six question survey instrument were emailed to the heads of 200 Jewish overnight camps and 140 Jewish day schools, with a response rate of 45% (n = 90), and 49% (n = 68) respectively. The survey was administered by Research Success Technologies Ltd under the direction of Ezra Kopelowitz with assistance from Shira Gura. Analysis was conducted by Jumpstart's research team (Principal investigator: Prof. Steven M. Cohen, Lead author: Dr. Shira Berkovits. Research advisor: Dr. Shawn Landres, Research Consultant: Guila Benchimol, and Research Manager: Joshua Avedon).

The survey instrument and frequencies are available upon request, please email survey@jumpstartlabs.org.

Child Safety Pledge

The Child Safety Pledge will work to end sexual abuse of minors in Jewish settings by elevating awareness and encouraging organizations to adopt best practices to prevent and report child sexual abuse.

The Pledge campaign urges the establishment of a universal and comprehensive pledge by funders of Jewish organizations that work with children to require their grantees do everything in their power to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse.

The goal of a Child Safety Pledge is to encourage funders to make grants and give donations only to those Jewish organizations that have implemented policies and procedures that address child sexual abuse – policies which apply to and are understood by all personnel who interact with children.

The immediate objective in establishing a Child Safety Pledge is to create a funding environment that rewards organizations that have adequate policies and procedures to prevent child sexual abuse through education, training, prevention, and reporting and simultaneously encourages non-compliant organizations to improve their policies and procedures.

The ultimate purpose is to create a safer, more transparent, and more accountable environment in Jewish organizations that work with children.

Learn more at childsafetypledge.org.

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a philanthropy research & design lab based in Los Angeles. Jumpstart's unique combination of original research, crafted convenings, strategic thinking, and direct support enables creative changemakers to realize their visions and advance the common good. Jumpstart inspires and equips visionary project and philanthropic leaders offering them the knowledge, relationships, and hands-on assistance they need to achieve measurable impact, build stronger communities, and transform the world.

Learn more at jumpstartlabs.org.

Sacred Spaces

Sacred Spaces is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Jewish institutions across the denominational spectrum prevent and respond to cases of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. It works to empower Jewish institutions – including synagogues, day schools, summer camps, and other professional workplaces – to be exemplars in the prevention and handling of abuse. Sacred Spaces' approach focuses on policy development and training catered to the unique needs of every Jewish institution, ultimately granting accreditation to those that have demonstrated compliance with legal and best practice standards. In partnership with communal leaders, Sacred Spaces seeks to support victims, prevent future abuse, and minimize damage to the institutions that serve the Jewish community.

Learn more at jewishspaces.org.

About the Author

Dr. Shira Berkovits is Founder and Executive Director of Sacred Spaces. She has helped Jewish communities across five continents prevent, handle and heal from institutional abuse. An attorney and psychologist with postdoctoral experience in child trauma and alternatives to incarceration, her book on child protection policies is due out this fall. Named to the Jewish Week's 36 Under 36, Dr. Berkovits has been involved in Jewish communal work for over a decade, most recently joining Wexner's inaugural cohort of Field Fellows.

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