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Four issues to address in child sexual abuse prevention education programs



1

Not all programs are equally effective

Programs that engage children only in verbal participation rate lower on effectiveness. Similarly, programs that rely on passive participation (watching videos, listening to presentations) tend to be less effective. Effectiveness can be improved by actively engaging children, and drawing in parents where possible.



2

Education programs often focus only on child sexual abuse perpetrated by adults

More focus is needed on the potential of children and young people to engage in harmful sexual behaviour with other children and young people (estimated at 30%). Interventions designed to stop concerning behaviour should be delivered to all students. Programs can be supplemented with additional support to children and young people showing early signs of concerning behaviour before it escalates.



3

Children with disability are at a higher risk of sexual abuse

Programs designed to cater to the learning needs of children with disability can be effective in increasing knowledge and improving self-protection. Effective programs teach children skills such as identifying body parts, recognising inappropriate behaviours, responding when uncomfortable (verbally refusing or leaving situations) and reporting concerns.



4

Sexuality education and abuse prevention are part of wider social issues

Children and young people need skills and knowledge in understanding their own sexuality and sexual development, and what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour from adults and peers. Educational programs on respectful relationships and prevention of harmful sexual behaviours need to be implemented in a way that holistically address the risks and enablers of sexual abuse from adults, harmful sexual behaviour from peers, bullying and gender-based violence.

