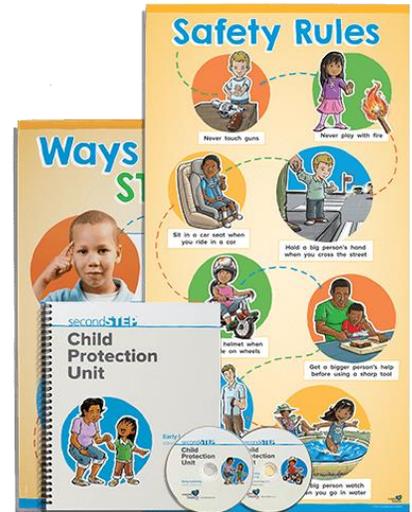


# Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine

## Curriculum Assessment of the Child Protective Unit of *Second Step*

### Introduction

This curriculum assessment of the Child Protective Unit (CPU) of Second Step was created by the Education Team at Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM). We are a local organization serving Midcoast communities with support, resources, information and consultation regarding sexual violence. This assessment is intended to help schools determine whether the lessons comprising CPU are appropriate and effective as a prevention education tool. Our conclusions do not necessarily reflect upon the larger Second Step curriculum package. SASSMM has evaluated CPU based on our own stringent, evidence-informed standards for child sexual abuse prevention education, and in some cases, juxtaposed CPU to our own original curriculum. This assessment represents our opinions and our recommendations. It does not represent the views of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the Children’s Safety Partnership, or any other group.



The information is organized thematically rather than by grade, but includes examples from all 6 grades (K-5). Due to the repetitive nature of the curriculum, in most cases concerns apply to lessons for every grade. Our assessment is laid out in two ways: first, there is a list and summaries of concerning trends; next, several tables of specific examples and explanations. The list of trends gives readers an overall picture of our concerns, whereas the tables delve into key content areas of the curriculum to give more detailed assessments.

Ultimately, SASSMM cannot recommend that schools implement the Child Protective Unit of Second Step in any way. While certain lessons do include empowering messages and relevant information, we feel that more harm than good is accomplished by teaching these lessons to children. As we disagree with the basic premise of CPU as pertains to child sexual abuse prevention, we do not believe it is possible to effectively modify or adapt these lessons to be trauma-informed, evidence-based, and engaging. We recommend that schools consider other available curriculums for providing prevention education to their students, and we would be happy to make suggestions and provide consultation on that choice.

## Overall Summary

### Concerning trends

1. Rules and safety protocols applied to child sexual abuse
2. Always Ask First rule applied to instances of sexual abuse
3. Excessive focus on refusal skills and reporting
4. Personal body safety information is unclear and absolutist
5. Frightening and problematic scenarios
6. Teaching style is not consent-based or considerate of students' feelings
7. Categorization of types of touches is confusing and non-inclusive
8. Lack of primary prevention and empowering messages
9. Not kid-friendly, engaging, or age-appropriate

### Specific concerns within key content areas

1. Types of Touches
  - a. Touches that do not hurt may still be unsafe
  - b. Focusing on whether or not a touch is "okay"/" safe" distracts from teaching consent
  - c. It is unnecessary and confusing to have a "unwanted" category of touches, and erases situations where a child may feel confused or unsure about a touch
  - d. Specific touches should not be linked with feelings
2. Refusing Touches
  - a. A child refusing will stop or prevent abuse from happening
  - b. It is children's responsibility to refuse touches
  - c. Assertive words and body language must be used when refusing touches
  - d. Refusal must be respectful and protective of the other person's feelings
  - e. Skill-building exercise forces students to practice refusing touches
3. Reporting
  - a. Reporting to adults is a rule that children are expected to always follow
  - b. Assertive communication is expected while reporting
  - c. Promises made about adults stopping the abuse
  - d. Asking for help from an adult is presented as a second option if refusing fails
  - e. Never keeping secrets about touching is a rule
  - f. Teachers are directed to call on students to report
4. The Touching Rule
  - a. Private parts are introduced and defined in the context of abuse/unwanted touching
  - b. Defining private areas in terms of bathing suits is inaccurate and confusing
  - c. Anatomically correct language is not inclusive
  - d. Lack of nuance regarding touches from doctors
  - e. Definition of private parts is absolutist and confusing

- f. Lack of specific examples of touches to help a child be safe/healthy
- g. Prohibits and shames healthy sexual exploration between peers
- h. Message regarding exposure comes too late and is not age-appropriate

## Explanation of concerning trends

### 1. Rules and safety protocols applied to child sexual abuse

Rules are the backbone of CPU and its approach to safety. While safety rules can be an effective way to teach children about danger, applying them to the issue of sexual abuse is problematic. Compared to most other types of unsafe situations, sexual abuse is much more complicated, and is often perpetrated by caregivers loved and trusted by the child. Therefore, creating rules for how a child “should” respond to abuse is not only unrealistic, but exacerbates the harm of the situation in numerous ways.

CPU safety rules that are applied to situations of sexual abuse include: The Ways to Stay Safe (Recognize, Report, Refuse); Never keep secrets about touching (one of the Never-Never Rules); the Always Ask First Rule; and the Touching/Private Body Parts Rule. The three cardinal rules of Recognize, Report, and Refuse also include many subrules that stipulate *how* children must follow them, such as mandating assertive communication. This excessive focus on rules, especially using elevated language like “refuse” and “report”, is likely to create anxiety and instill fear in children. While this may be the intention, we do not believe it is an appropriate or effective approach to protecting children from abuse.

In Lesson 1 for Kindergarten, children are told: “You keep yourself safe by following the rules.” This expectation is not consistent with our understanding of trauma responses in situations of abuse. Many children will be unable to “follow” these rules, which will likely exacerbate feelings of self-blame, shame, and guilt that are typical results of sexual abuse. A child’s sense of self-worth could be negatively impacted if they believe they have “broken” a rule, or that they are not “good at” following the rules. The curriculum seems to reinforce this idea with phrases like: “Julie is good at remembering rules, such as the Touching Rule. She’s also good at using the Ways to Stay Safe. Watch how Julie stays safe by remembering the rules and using the Ways to Stay Safe.” (Kindergarten, Lesson 6).

As kids get older, the responsibility placed on them to protect themselves and others becomes more intense. In Grade 4, Lesson 1, students are told: “Whose responsibility is it to keep you safe when you’re alone? (Yours.)” This escalates in Grade 5, Lesson 1: “But sometimes there might not be an adult nearby who can help keep you safe. When that happens, it’s your job keep yourself safe. It may also be your job to keep others safe, such as younger brothers or sisters.”

This is reinforced in the music video for Grades 4 and 5, as the teacher raps “You know the rules/you’re old enough/you know how to do things right/You’ve got the power in you now to keep you safe all day and night.” Again, children can interpret that enduring their abuse is “breaking a rule,” and that they’re not doing the “right” thing. This can deepen feelings of shame and isolation. As children get older, it is appropriate to expect greater self-control and responsible decision-making in unsafe situations, but it is absurd to apply this logic to sexual abuse.

Paradoxically, rules may also present a barrier to disclosing. Even when children are told they are not responsible, the specter of a broken rule could still induce fear of getting in trouble. Likewise, given that the vast majority of children are abused by someone close to them, they may be concerned about consequences for that person if they disclose.

CPU's rule that kids should never touch guns is appropriate and clear. However, situations of sexual abuse are so varied and complicated that it is almost impossible to create a rule that will consistently apply. Each household has different norms and boundaries that may technically break the Touching Rule without actually being unsafe. Likewise, there are many examples of abusive acts that do not fall under the Touching Rule. When rules have too many exceptions, they become confusing rather than offering clarity.

## **2. Always Ask First rule applied to instances of sexual abuse**

While teaching children to check in with caretakers is a good practice, the way the Always Ask First rule is applied to situations of child sexual abuse is harmful. In Grade 4, Lesson 4, a child is spending time with her older cousin at a family barbeque when the cousin touches her inappropriately. He apologizes, and then invites her to go down to the lake with him. The child believes him and does not report the broken Touching Rule or ask a parent before going with him to the lake, where he exposes himself to her. Scenarios like this one, in which a child does not follow the Always Ask First rule and is then violated, could send the message that the situation was the child's fault. If a child believes that "following the Always Ask First Rule will help you and the people in charge of you keep you safe" (Grade 5, Lesson 2), then they may be more likely to feel that the abuse would not have happened had they asked first. In these cases, the absolutism of the Always Ask First rule could also make a child who did not follow the rule fear that they will get in trouble if they disclose abuse.

In Grade 4, Lesson 1, students are told: "To help you decide if something is safe, always ask your parents or the person in charge first." In reality, a rule like "Always Ask First" cannot always protect children from abuse. CPU includes several situations of abuse in which a child *does* ask a parent before going somewhere with someone, but the parent says yes despite the child's misgivings (Grade 5, Lesson 6). In these cases, the Always Ask First rule did not keep the child safe, and it would have been better for the child to trust their own gut about the situation rather than defer to their parent's judgment.

Many children have had the experience of a trusted adult letting them down. The rhetoric of Always Ask First is intended to keep kids safe, but it does not validate the lived experience of children who know that adults are not perfect and may not always make them feel safe. A close caregiver may not always be the best adult to talk to in times of need.

There is another significant incongruency between the rhetoric of the Always Ask First rule and the situations of abuse as shown in the curriculum. Kids are told to ask a parent or the "person in charge", who is specified to be "the older person who is responsible for making sure you're safe when you're not with your parents" (Grade 5, Lesson 2). Unfortunately, both in the examples in CPU as well as in real life, survivors of sexual abuse are often violated by a close, trusted adult while under their care. The curriculum does not acknowledge the broken trust in these instances when the "person in charge" and the abuser is the same individual. While well-

intended, one of the unfortunate impacts of the Always Ask First rule is teaching children to be deferential to adult caretakers, even those who are actively perpetrating unsafe situations. While the hypothetical children in the scenarios always seem to distinguish the “right” adult to ask, in real life many children will recognize an abuser as the “person in charge”. In those cases, a rule like Always Ask First can increase that person’s power over the child.

### **3. Excessive focus on refusal skills and reporting**

Throughout the curriculum, there is a heavy emphasis on refusal skills, with many scenarios showing kids refusing abusive touches. This perpetuates the untrue idea that if children refuse touches, they can prevent their own abuse from happening. It's unrealistic to suggest refusal will cause abusive touches to stop, as refusing can actually put a child in more danger. If a child does not use the refusal technique (or using the refusal technique is unsuccessful) during an abusive encounter, it can leave the child feeling like they should have done more or that the situation is their fault. Activities are utilized throughout the curriculum that put students on the spot to practice refusing abusive touches, which can further exacerbate students’ discomfort.

As adults concerned about child sexual abuse, naturally we want students to tell us when this crime is happening to them. It is a very distressing thought that a child we know may be carrying this secret. Nonetheless, we know that most survivors of sexual abuse do not disclose their experiences until they feel safe, often due to separation from the abuser. In addition, many choose to confide in a peer rather than an adult. As uncomfortable as it may be, we must recognize that the child being abused will disclose when they are ready, to the person and in the way that feels right to them. Attempting to force this process with a rule is harmful for the same reasons enumerated above. Instead, we can seek to empower students to ask for help from adults by affirming and encouraging them, and above all, fostering safety in our relationships with them.

The rigid expectation that children follow the safety rules regardless of circumstances is reinforced by many of the scenarios. The expectation that children recognize, refuse and continue to report never wavers, regardless of severity of the situation or obstacles to disclosing. In one scenario, a child who is at the movies with her uncle not only firmly pushes his hand away from her private parts, but actually gets up and moves to a different seat (Grade 3, Lesson 4). This models behavior for students that is absolutely unfair and unrealistic to place on victims of child sexual abuse, particularly those who are abused by a trusted caregiver whom they are alone with and dependent upon. Instead of rigidly focusing on teaching behaviors to avoid or respond to abuse, a prevention curriculum should provide options for dealing with difficult situations, and express trust in each child's lived experience and ability to choose the best option for them at that time.

Similarly, the lessons emphasize that children should keep reporting even if they aren’t initially believed, without validating how painful and discouraging it can be to be dismissed after having the courage to talk about abuse (Kindergarten, Lesson 5). Experiencing sexual abuse, especially as a child, generally means trust has been broken. It is a lot to ask a child who has been violated by someone close to them to continue to trust that adults will listen and believe their story. Therefore, CPU's simplistic approach to continuing to report after being disbelieved invalidates children’s feelings in a way that will not help foster a safe classroom environment.

Similarly, CPU covers the issue of grooming explicitly, particularly in Grades 4 and 5, but the children in the scenarios seem impervious to the manipulation of their abusers. While the intention of the curriculum seems to be to teach children to recognize and overcome the effects of grooming, the impact is to shame children who have reacted to abuse in a developmentally expected way. The same idea is reinforced in the music video for Grades 4 and 5, as kids sing: “I’ve got the power to refuse and report/and avoid being coerced.” While this is an attempt at empowering students, it fails to recognize that sexual abuse is an exploitation of power. Children often don’t have the power to avoid being coerced.

#### **4. Personal body safety information is unclear and absolutist**

Many children, whether they have experienced abuse or not, feel shame and confusion about their genitals. Educating children about their bodies using medically accurate information is a tenet of sexual abuse prevention, but we must be very thoughtful about the messages we offer. By neglecting to teach students about their bodies in a holistic, neutral way, this curriculum encourages a stigmatizing association between private parts and unwanted touches.

While the inclusion of anatomically-correct language is a step in the right direction, unfortunately the information regarding private areas is confusing and exclusionary. A bathing suit does not effectively explain where private parts are located on the body, and using gendered language to define “penis” and “vagina” is alienating for transgender and gender non-conforming children. It is possible to describe genitalia in a way that is both specific and inclusive of the diversity of bodies and identities that exist.

When it comes to personal body safety information, this curriculum suffers from a lack of nuance and specific examples. Rules and absolutist statements accumulate despite legitimate exceptions, and a number of developmentally appropriate behaviors are lumped together with abuse. This section of any personal body safety lesson is always the most complicated, as situations that constitute abuse vary widely and each child has different needs pertaining to getting help with their body. As many perpetrators attempt to conceal their abuse under the guise of “helping” the child, it is best to brainstorm with children specific examples of appropriate touches, so that they can better distinguish actual help from unnecessary touching. It is also important to encourage inquisitiveness and a strong sense of bodily autonomy. Children should be taught that they have the right to ask questions and say how they feel about any touches to their body.

#### **5. Frightening and problematic scenarios**

If a survivor of sexual abuse views or listens to a story in which a character is sexually violated, they are very likely to be emotionally triggered, causing sudden feelings of panic, fear, disassociation, sadness, etc. This can cause a re-traumatization, in which the individual is mentally and emotionally forced to relive certain aspects of their own traumatic experience. Abuse prevention lessons that are truly trauma-informed do not include any explicit scenarios, examples, or stories involving harm to children, as doing so creates a classroom environment that will feel frightening and unpredictable to many students.

In CPU, hypothetical frightening situations are shared with students in virtually every lesson, in the form of detailed stories as well as short examples. When images or videos accompany the stories of abuse, a common practice in CPU, the experience of re-traumatization for a child survivor is likely to be even more vivid and intense. When abusive characters manipulate and threaten, their words may mirror those said by real abusers of children in the classroom. A list of brief scenarios is typically used as an assessment tool at the end of each lesson, with students told to imagine the situations happening to them, and to answer a question posed by the teacher. This practice in particular, as well as being forced to listen to longer scenarios that gradually escalate with increasingly explicit abuse, is likely to cause feelings of overwhelm and dread among students. Generally, the lesson scripts do not direct the teacher to acknowledge and validate that the scenarios are upsetting to listen to/watch and may be distressing to students.

In addition to the emotional harm, it is also ineffective to use fear-based tactics as teaching tools. When a child is frightened, extremely uncomfortable, or experiencing dissociation, they enter a “fight or flight” mode. The prefrontal cortex of their brain is not able to integrate the information being shared. Young children in particular do not yet have the cognitive maturity to process explicit stories of sexual abuse in a healthy way.

In addition to being scary and shocking, the scenarios offer a type of fantasy about how situations of sexual abuse can be neatly resolved, so long as the child discloses to the right person. The scenarios always conclude with the child being believed, supported, and feeling protected by safe adults, even in cases where the abuser was someone close to them. For example, in a scenario in Grade 2, Lesson 4, a child is abused by his grandpa. He reports to his mom, and as a result he can no longer spend time alone with his grandpa. Similarly, in the next lesson, a child is abused by a babysitter who has been caring for her all her life. As a result of disclosing, the child never sees her babysitter again. Obviously, it is necessary to separate abusers from their victims or to implement strict boundaries so that children are protected. Nonetheless, we would expect children who have been abused by a caregiver they loved and trusted to feel many conflicting emotions about how their relationship with that person has changed or ended as a result of disclosing.

For children to actually learn and remember protective messages, they must feel safe. Children do not need explicit, shocking examples to learn how to recognize unsafe situations. By teaching students about bodily autonomy, consent, and personal boundaries, we can empower them to notice when they feel unsafe or unsure about a situation, and to seek help from adults they trust.

## **6. Teaching style is not consent-based or considerate of students’ feelings**

The lessons in CPU lack group norms or classroom agreements to establish safety and comfort, and the sensitive topics are not discussed in a trauma-informed way. For example, the introduction to the conversation about private parts does not build comfort or rapport with students, or seem to recognize that kids may feel nervous discussing this topic at school. It would be beneficial to let students know they might feel silly/awkward, give kids options for how much they participate, what to do if they need a break, etc. Similarly, in grade 5, the scenario involving a nude photo is not discussed delicately, even though it is likely that some 5<sup>th</sup> graders have already experienced coercion to share naked photos of themselves.

Failing to validate the feelings that may come up for children, makes it very hard for an educator to build a trusting relationship with students. It's important to recognize that the adult implementing this curriculum might be the only adult who has opened up communication on these topics with kids. For this reason, it's of utmost priority to implement the curriculum with care and build trust so that students are more likely to choose to disclose experiences they need help with.

Consent is a tenant of effective prevention education, but this curriculum is not consent based. Many activities and scenarios are likely to make children uncomfortable at best, and re-traumatized at worst. Exercises require students to stand up in front of their peers and perform refusal or reporting without their consent. Paradoxically, there's a heavy emphasis on refusing touches but no opportunity to refuse participating in this activity. Pressuring or forcing students to participate in an activity that makes them uncomfortable is antithetical to the messages of consent and empowerment we want to send to kids. Mandating participation, in any way, is not in the best interest of CSA prevention education.

## **7. Categorization of types of touches is confusing and non-inclusive**

Most sexual abuse is perpetrated by an adult who is close to the child and goes out of their way to gain the child's respect and love over a period of time. During this grooming process of manipulation, the adult prepares the child to accept the abuse and/or believe they deserve the abuse.

When an adult who is admired and trusted by a child begins touching their private parts, the child may experience conflicting emotional and physiological reactions. Touches constituting sexual abuse are not necessarily physically painful or uncomfortable. Even if a child is unsure about a touch, their body may react with sensations that are "positive" and which the child has no control over. They may also experience confusion or desensitization more prominently than discomfort.

Numerous scenarios in CPU reinforce the message that touches to the private parts will make a child feel uncomfortable. Codifying discomfort as the "normal" response to sexual touching may elicit shame for abused children with a more complicated experience.

GPU teaches children that all touches can be categorized as either "safe" or "unsafe," and that only touches that hurt a child's body are "unsafe." Under this definition, it would be very easy for a child to assume that any touch which makes them feel good is a "safe" touch. While this paradigm of "safe" versus "unsafe" touches may help children in situations in physical abuse, it is likely to confuse them if they are suffering sexual abuse.

There are also touches that can be just as abusive in nature as "unsafe" touches or touches to the private parts. Sometimes adults will force or coerce children into touches that are sexual in nature, but are otherwise "safe," such as tickling, licking non-sensuous body parts, stroking hair, etc. Additionally, sexual abuse does not need to include touching by the perpetrator to be considered abusive. For example, an abuser might expose themselves, communicate sexually explicit fantasies, show sexually explicit material, coerce the child to self-touch, or take sexually explicit photos of the child.

The way that GPU categorizes touches as "unwanted" is also likely to cause confusion and puts the responsibility on the child to determine how they feel about a touch. For children who have experienced sexual abuse, there may be competing feelings towards their abuser, attachment as well as distress and confusion about what happened. Students will likewise be confused by language that says a touch is "okay"

because it is not hurting a person, even if that touch is unwanted and is violating someone's personal space. Therefore, focusing on whether a touch is "okay" ("safe") distracts from the more important question of whether or not there is consent present. The responsibility should be on the person who is initiating the touch to ask for consent first, not the person receiving it to identify it as unwanted and refuse it.

## **8. Lack of primary prevention and empowering messages**

For many years, the sexual violence movement thought of "prevention" in terms of helping people reduce their risk of being assaulted. The overall incidence of violence was not being addressed, but it was thought that individuals could avoid victimization through changes in their behavior: for example, learning self-defense, covering their drinks at bars or parties, carrying a rape whistle, using the buddy system, etc. We now recognize that these risk reduction strategies, while they may be helpful in certain situations, ultimately place all responsibility on the victim to avoid assault. They also tend to foster a culture of fear and suspicion, often based upon stereotypes and bias. Risk reduction alone cannot prevent sexual violence, and in many cases, these strategies and messages can be harmful by contributing to a culture of victim-blaming.

The type of approach known as primary prevention focuses on reducing and ultimately eliminating the social factors that perpetuate sexual violence, to keep it from happening in the first place. This means putting the focus on perpetrators rather than victims, and striving to change the foundational cultural norms and conditions that help create violence. Empowering individuals with messages about bodily autonomy, consent, and personal boundaries is also an important part of primary prevention programming.

The best child sexual abuse prevention programs generally blend elements of appropriate, trauma-informed risk reduction with primary prevention messages and approaches. For example, in addition to learning that they can say no to touching and get help from adults with problems, children also practice empathy and social attunement by respecting the personal space of others. The culture of respect, consent, and accountability that is created in the classroom is itself a teaching tool that can help protect children in situations of victimization as well as future perpetration.

CPU does include some messages we would consider primary prevention; for example, teaching children that their bodies belong to them. However, the overwhelming focus on teaching individual behaviors to respond to abuse leaves no space for genuinely empowering kids, and also puts the responsibility for avoiding harm on their shoulders. Any curriculum centered on the rules of refuse and report, which are inherently reactive, will not help children build protective factors such as self-esteem. Eventually, children will age out of following these rules, and will not have been given the tools to navigate relationships later in life.

## **9. Not kid-friendly, engaging, or age-appropriate**

In order to learn, kids must be actively engaged in the lesson. While CPU is not exactly boring, it is likely to generate students' attention by inciting anxiety and discomfort rather than offering activities that are fun and age-appropriate. The curriculum relies upon two main teaching methods – storytelling and highly structured debriefing, and the performative exercise in which students "practice" refusing or reporting touches.

Particularly for younger children, it is important to infuse lessons with a sense of playfulness, even when teaching protective messaging and skills related to child sexual abuse.

As students get older, the curriculum's messages and methods do not evolve to meet their developmental needs. CPU continues to rely upon teaching rules and stories that incite fear and self-blame, rather than creating open dialogue about the nuanced topics that are crucially important for children on the cusp of puberty. For example, there is a lack of open-ended discussion about personal boundaries in peer relationships, navigating difficult situations online and using technology, the importance of privacy, and the qualities of a healthy relationship. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders need the opportunity to raise their own unique concerns, share their experiences in a safe way, and demonstrate their knowledge about a topic. It is also important to help older students learn how to support one another with difficult situations, as we know that young adolescents will increasingly rely on their peers instead of the adults in their lives.

Instead, CPU continues the same simplistic approach and information that students first received in Kindergarten. By this age, the messaging is incredibly repetitive, but the scenarios are even more frightening and extreme. Some of the content specifically for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade seems outdated and babyish – particularly the music video “I’m in Charge”.

By the time students are in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, we believe that it is no longer beneficial to talk directly about private body parts in the classroom. We still talk about bodies, consent, and personal space, but we do not place special attention on certain areas of the body. At this age, students are becoming more self-conscious around their peers, and if they have received the information multiple times throughout grades K-2, we do not feel it is necessary to cause embarrassment by using the words “penis” and “vagina” in the classroom. Students who are very uncomfortable are more likely to disengage from the lesson or to try to save face in front of their friends by making jokes, which can be upsetting to children who relate to the content being taught.

Children in grades 3-5 are increasingly capable of abstract thinking and making connections. Instead of describing abuse, we can help them to recognize unsafe situations by teaching consent, bodily autonomy, privacy, boundaries, and modeling how adults should be treating them. We teach children that their feelings and boundaries matter, and that they have the right to share them if they feel comfortable doing so, or to get help from someone they trust. Sometimes, the most important impact of a prevention program isn't the information, but the way the educator makes a child feel. Creating a safe and affirming environment can help counteract some of the effects of grooming and abuse: the feelings of confusion, suspicion, self-blame, guilt, worthlessness, etc. Many survivors of sexual abuse recognize on some level that what's happening to them is not okay, but they may believe that help does not exist or that they are not deserving of help. Our job as prevention educators is not to tell children how to handle the traumatic situation, but to reaffirm their value and to create opportunities for them to get help.

*Created by The Education Team at Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine; last updated January 2021. Please visit our website at [sassmm.org](http://sassmm.org) to learn more and get in touch with us.*