



The Need for Child-Friendly Systemic Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

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The Prevention-Response Issue

Can CSA really be prevented from occurring?

- Those motivated to engage in CSA will always find ways to do so.
- Child safety policies (CCTVs/ background checks etc), though useful, as they act as deterrents, cannot totally prevent abuse.
- Coercive/ violent acts of sexual abuse are not preventable i.e. children cannot be expected to protect themselves.
- Non-coercive forms of CSA (contact and non-contact) occur due to the nature of child adult relationships i.e. hierarchical/ authoritative...in a culture of obedience, where it is not acceptable for children to say 'no' ...protecting themselves from CSA is difficult.

Therefore a Strong Response to CSA is Essential!

Prevention=Response=Prevention...

So then what does CSA prevention really mean? How can preventive activities help ?

- Early reporting by children/ family/ caregivers.
- Increased alertness and ability of child to resist (further) abuse.
- Reduced psychological morbidity (greater awareness/ understanding—therefore less chances of shame/ guilt and negative self-thoughts).
- Adolescents at risk, due to family and situation vulnerabilities, can be better equipped to protect themselves from abuse. (eg- devadasi children/ street children).

Objectives of CSA Response

- To streamline, systematize and make more child-friendly all the medico-legal processes involved in CSA enquiry.
- To arrive at a consensus about the sequence of inquiry and related processes that child and family need to engage in (incl. school, CWC, NGO, legal agencies/ police).
- To ensure that legal processes, including inquiry and evidence gathering, are strongly embedded in healing processes facilitated by child care services experts.
- To examine the function of SJPU, police investigative mechanisms, ICPS, CWC, and judiciary (in relation to CSA investigations), and to arrive at role clarity and a consensus on sensitization/ training needs of these parties.

**What does CSA Response
Comprise of?**

School Response

- Identification of a person at school known to the children, and who can respond in a sensitive and gentle manner to alleged instances of abuse reported by the child.
- Identification of a next-level reporting authority (such as the principal) who will inform the parents.
- Provision of guidance and help to parents to access the first level medical and other facilities, including reporting to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).
- Referral to trained counsellors/ child mental health experts to provide psychosocial support and assistance to the child.
- Adoption of a proactive stance with the concerned parents and other parents, by addressing their fears and reassuring them that the necessary actions will be taken to help the child.
- Organization of de-briefing sessions for students and teachers following an incident.
- Preparation to receive the child back at school in natural and non-stigmatizing ways so that the child re-integrates comfortably.

Medical Response

- Medical investigation and evidence
- Treatment of injuries
- Post-exposure prophylaxis
- *Predicated on psychosocial well-being of child

Psychosocial Response

- Addressing Post-Traumatic Stress Issues
- Supporting family to help the child
- Individual work with the child
- Reintegration into school

Law Enforcement & Legal Response

- Mandatory Reporting Processes
- Inquiry with the child be conducted once instead of multiple times, and only by police personnel trained in CSA/ forensic interviewing with children
- Police investigation of child be conducted only by trained SJPU or if needed assisted by child care service experts

What Police Interviewing must Avoid:

- Interviewing child in police station.
- Having the perpetrator and the child come face to face.
- Repeated questioning.
- Taking the child to the scene of crime and/or re-enacting event.
- Persuading child to provide information through insistence/ use of sweets, toys, chocolate.
- Touching the child unnecessarily.

*According to considerations of child psychosocial well-being

How Can We Develop a Response to CSA?

Designing a Response to Include...

- Protocol for sequence of where child and family need to seek assistance.
- Protocols to be followed by schools (and child care agencies).
- Training of the following in CSA response protocol and processes:
 - ICPS Staff
 - Schools
 - Law Enforcement and Legal Personnel (Selected cadres of police and judiciary)