



## Care for Kids



### What is Care for Kids, and why would I be interested in it?

Educators are committed to promoting the healthy development of young children. Physical, psychological, social, intellectual, and sexual development are all equally important. However, sexual development is often not addressed. The Care for Kids program, a healthy sexuality education and sexual abuse prevention program for children preschool to Grade 3, including Learning and Life Skills classes, may be the answer for you.

Talking openly and positively with children about sexuality encourages children to come to adults with their concerns about feelings, touching, or secrets. Research shows that children who learn the proper names of private parts of the body are less likely to be abused. Research also shows that children who received a sexual abuse prevention program in school had more confidence in themselves, and had established touch boundaries.

Traditional sexual abuse prevention approaches are often not helpful to the young child. Such common approaches include:

- *Stranger Danger*  
While child abduction is every parent's worst nightmare, the vast majority of child sexual abuse is at the hand of a known and trusted adult. *Stranger danger* strategies are inappropriate in these instances. The message to avoid offenders also places a heavy responsibility on young children, and is developmentally inappropriate.
- *Good Touch/Bad Touch*  
This approach assumes that the child will recognize the abuse. One must recognize that offenders often manipulate the child, very gradually pushing the child's touch boundaries so that the violation seems very minor. As well, the seduction may involve treats or special privileges, and all this feels "good".
- *No-Go-Tell*  
This approach presupposes that children will recognize that a situation is abusive, and that they are capable of saying "no" to a powerful adult. This also assumes that the child has another place to go, and the ability to do so. Again, this approach places the responsibility for safety on the child.

In order to protect young children from sexual abuse, they need to be taught useful concepts about their bodies, sexuality, feelings, and touch boundaries. Care for Kids provides this education. Self-esteem and positive attitudes towards sexuality and gender are promoted. Children are helped to establish body boundaries and cope with boundary violations.

Children also need responsible adults who provide protection, and systems that will respond quickly and constructively.

## Care for Kids helps teachers meet curriculum guidelines.

The **Kindergarten** curriculum requires that children:

- demonstrate an awareness of health and safety practices for themselves and others, and a basic awareness of their own well-being;
- demonstrate respect and consideration for individual differences;
- begin to demonstrate self-control (e.g. be aware of and label their own emotions);
- develop empathy for others, and acknowledge and respond to each other's feelings;
- practise and discuss appropriate personal hygiene; and
- discuss what actions to take when they feel unsafe or uncomfortable, and when and how to seek assistance in an unsafe situation (e.g. inappropriate touching).

The **Grade One** curriculum requires that children:

- describe simple life cycles of plants and animals, including humans;
- recognize that rest, food, and exercise affect growth;
- identify the major parts of the body by their proper names;
- distinguish the similarities and differences between themselves and others in terms of body size and gender; and
- identify people who can provide personal safety assistance, and explain how to access them.

The **Grade Two** curriculum requires that children:

- describe parts of the human body, the functions of these parts, and behaviours that contribute to good health;
- distinguish the similarities and differences between themselves and others (e.g. in terms of body size or gender); and
- explain the importance of being able to say “no” to exploitive behaviour (e.g. improper touching) and describe how to seek help.

The **Grade Three** curriculum requires that children:

- outline the basic human and animal reproductive processes (e.g. the union of egg and sperm) and describe basic changes in growth and development from birth to childhood; and
- use a problem-solving process to identify ways of obtaining support for personal safety in the home, school, and community.

## How can I implement Care for Kids in the classroom?

Prior to implementing a children's program, it is important to share information with parents. A Public Health Nurse is available to lead the parent information session, and to mentor program implementation. A program manual and resource kit is available on loan from the Health Unit. **If you have questions or would like a presentation to staff or your School Council on the Care for Kids program, please call Jennifer Lesurf, Public Health Nurse at 743-1000 ext. 235.**