

Speech by Jennifer Mitchell and Rosemary Webb,
National Personal Safety Experts and Co-Presidents of Child Lures Prevention/Teen Lures Prevention
presented at
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In the context of The 30th Anniversary of The Convention on the Rights of the Child
**PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN:
AN EDUCATIONAL TOOLBOX**



[This speech by Mitchell & Webb followed screening of Tom's Secret video to the United Nations audience.]

Hello, my name is Jennifer Mitchell and this is my colleague Rosemary Webb. We are with the child personal safety organization Child Lures Prevention/Teen Lures Prevention, the U.S. partner of Tom's Secret video.

Thirty five years ago, our father Kenneth Wooden begin our mission of protecting children and youth. While writing two published books, *Weeping in the Playtime of Others: America's Incarcerated Children* and *The Children of Jonestown*, he learned firsthand the magnitude of the problem of child sexual abuse. Through his work with ABC News 20/20, he reported on the lures and grooming behaviors sexual offenders use and specific ways we can help prevent child sexual abuse.

Thank you, Ambassador Shechter and Ambassador Stevens, for prioritizing the prevention of child sexual abuse here today (*at the United Nations in Geneva*). Thank you for emphasizing the importance of an educational toolbox to help bring about a positive cultural change across the globe.

We offer for the toolbox evidence-based K-12 curricula that has been scientifically evaluated and proven to be effective. Developed by trained educator, published author and investigative reporter Dr. Kenneth Wooden, and disseminated over the past 35 years, Think First and Stay Safe™ Adult Training and Youth Curriculum and Teen Lures TV Newscast™ School Program are utilized by over 9000 schools and school systems - reaching hundreds of thousands of students **annually**.

Six years ago, Child Lures Prevention formed a Global Partnership to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse with Tom's Secret (*The Global Army Against Child Abuse*), incorporating this excellent educational video into Think First & Stay Safe's existing classroom Lesson "All Secrets Can Be Told." The video has been viewed over 710,000 times on Child Lures Prevention/Teen Lures Prevention's YouTube Channel and by millions of children through Think First & Stay Safe's classroom-based prevention program.

Using two models of school-based implementation, educators, parents/guardians and students can be taught sexual abuse prevention education every year in every grade.

1. Schools can implement the training and curricula using school personnel such as health educators, school counselors or school nurses.
2. Or schools can bring in outside presenters, Prevention Educators, who are specially trained and employed by a local Child Advocacy Center or Rape Crisis Center.

For example, in Indiana, one Child Advocacy Center (*the Indiana Center for Prevention of Youth Abuse & Suicide*) presented Think First and Stay Safe and Teen Lures TV Newscast curricula to over 100,000 K-12 students last year in 126 schools within 9 counties. These presentations resulted in 1,853 student requests to talk to a Trusted Adult and 107 reports of sexual abuse made to the Department of Children's Services. Parent materials were sent home with each student taught. So 1,746 children sought out assistance for questionable or problematic situations following the school-based presentations. This is Primary Prevention at work. 107 youth recognized abusive situations, reported them and received help to begin healing. This is Secondary Prevention at work.

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Children want to learn and discuss personal safety issues. By talking openly about sexual harassment, sexual abuse, bullying/cyberbullying, digital and online exploitation, sexual images of children (*child pornography*) and human trafficking, we can help prevent these crimes against the world's children. Children and teens are taught to ask for help with any situation, as well as if they are having thoughts of harming self or others.

Implementation fidelity is important: Child Advocacy Center Prevention Educators are specially trained, trauma informed and trauma responsive. The Program's Training modules help ensure educators and teachers are too, and can also identify at-risk populations of students to provide additional programming and support for those students. Also that policies and procedures are in place in schools and all child serving organizations to help keep kids safe.

Another Child Advocacy Center called Holly's House has taught Think First and Stay Safe for the past 10 years throughout 5 counties. Six years of pre-and post test evaluations of 38,000 students in 1800 classrooms, with control groups, show students consistently increase their knowledge and skills each year (Kindergarten, 33% increase; Grades 1-2, 37%; Grades 3-4, 27% and Grades 5-6, 28%), with post-test outcomes of 80% or higher correct responses. (<https://childluresprevention.com/evaluations>)

Holly's House recently partnered with the University of Evansville (*in Indiana*) to conduct a first-ever study on increased rates of substantiation for children who went through a prevention education program. Researchers were able to document that children exposed to the Think First and Stay Safe program are 12.4% more likely to disclose. The children who received Think First and Stay Safe and did disclose had more detailed stories and were 60% more likely to be substantiated (Elfreich et al, 2019). Of the children exposed to Think First and Stay Safe who had forensic interviews, 68% of reported abuse was substantiated. Of those who hadn't been exposed to the program, only 8% of reported abuse was substantiated and 92% of cases were not substantiated. (*This study was published in the Journal of Child Maltreatment in September, 2019. Researcher Molly Elfreich also presented the study's findings at the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children Colloquium on June 22, 2019.*)

A year after adding Tom's Secret video to Think First and Stay Safe, two girls in Hartford, Connecticut disclosed that their family's close friend, Kenneth Baker, 75 years old had been abusing them. Police credited the school-based prevention program at their church to the girls' disclosure. The sisters had learned through the curriculum and Tom's Secret video that all secrets can be told, and that it's never too late to report sexual abuse. (*The Archdiocese of Hartford has been using Think First and Stay Safe/Teen Lures TV Newscast curricula since 2005, one of hundreds of faith-based organizations using the training and curricula.*)

Prevention education works! We are a data driven world. By using training and curricular resources proven to work, we can help protect children and families globally. By doing this, we are investing in the future...one safe and healthy child at a time. (END)

Elfreich, M., Stevenson, M., Sisson, C., Winstead, A., Parmenter, K. (2019). Sexual Abuse Disclosure Mediates the Effect of an Abuse Prevention Program on Substantiation. *Journal of Child Maltreatment*, 1-9. doi: 10.1177/1077559519874884.

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