



BUILDING YOUR CASE

A PREVENTION TEMPLATE

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This template is designed for professionals building a case for child sexual abuse prevention. You could be a policymaker, a philanthropy professional, a practitioner, or working in industry.

Each section is intended to help you start to structure and build your case more effectively. Potential for scale, ambition, risk appetite, cost, and feasibility are unique in every location and organizational context. It is essential that your case is rooted in local realities.

We hope this template helps you make your case for prevention.

Need help? Get in touch with Prevention Global now if you'd like to discuss how we can support you.

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1 FRAMING

The framing of prevention is really important. Child sexual abuse is a subject every society struggles to discuss. That's why we need to articulate the foundations of why prevention matters and how it must form part of a holistic approach to ending child sexual abuse. Below is some sample text for you to explore, adopt, adapt, and amend.

Child sexual abuse is preventable, not inevitable.

Research shows that prevention interventions bring results¹. Child sexual abuse is not a uniquely unpreventable social ill. Fatalism is a real barrier to action on prevention, and it must be challenged. That's a key part of building the case for prevention. We can do this, collectively, as a community of nations, industry leaders, and civil society actors. But we have to commit and be willing to lead.

Prevention is not an option, it's an urgent necessity.

The cost of child sexual abuse to individuals and society is huge². The need for proactive prevention at scale is self-evident. Inaction implicitly accepts a baseline level of abuse in our society, and that is a human cost we cannot accept.

Most fundamentally, we have a moral duty to prevent our children suffering sexual abuse. It is not a child's responsibility to prevent their abuse. It is ours.

To prevent at scale, we need to target cause, as well as symptom.

We are getting a clearer understanding of where and how child sexual abuse occurs.

Numerous studies show us that most harm is caused by someone known to the child and that a significant proportion, and sometimes a majority, of abuse is committed by another child³. This is a wake-up call.

To prevent at scale, we need to urgently invest in primary prevention – that means programs that work with our children and youth. We must recognize that problematic sexual behavior, particularly in the context of online access to adult content, begins young... and that it is absolutely preventable. Prevention is an investment in current AND future generations. The potential for cumulative impact is vast.

¹Johanna Lätth, Valdemar Landgren, Allison McMahan, Charlotte Sparre, Julia Eriksson, Kinda Malki, Elin Söderquist, Katarina Görts Öberg, Alexander Rozental, Gerhard Andersson, Viktor Kaldo, Niklas Långström, Christoffer Rahm. Effects of internet-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy on use of child sexual abuse material: A randomized placebo-controlled trial on the Darknet, Internet Interventions, Volume 30, 2022, 100590, ISSN 2214-7829, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2022.100590>; Assini-Meytin, L. C., McPhail, I., Sun, Y., Mathews, B., Kaufman, K. L., & Letourneau, E. J. (2024). Child Sexual Abuse and Boundary Violating Behaviors in Youth Serving Organizations: National Prevalence and Distribution by Organizational Type. Child Maltreatment <https://doi.org/10.1177/107755952412907>; Letourneau, E. J., Schaeffer, C. M., Bradshaw, C. P., Ruzicka, A. E., Assini-Meytin, L. C., Nair, R., & Thorne, E. (2024). Responsible Behavior With Younger Children: Results From a Pilot Randomized Evaluation of a School-Based Child Sexual Abuse Perpetration Prevention Program. Child Maltreatment, 29(1), 129-141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10775595221130737>

²Letourneau, E. J., Brown, D. S., Fang, X., Hassan, A., & Mercy, J. A. (2018). The economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States. Child Abuse & Neglect, 79, 413-422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.02.020>

³Disrupting Harm <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/projects/disrupting-harm>; Australian Child Maltreatment Study <https://www.acms.au/>; Gewirtz-Meydan, A., & Finkelhor, D. (2020). Sexual abuse and assault in a large national sample of children and adolescents. Child Maltreatment, 25(2), 203-214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559519873975>

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2 DATA

We need several core data points to effectively cost, design, and implement prevention strategies. What do you have? What are you missing? What are your data priorities?



Prevalence data:

victimization and perpetration



Cost analysis:

national burden & projected savings



Public perception:

survey research



Projected value:

prevalence reduction

3 COST

Consider emphasizing the human cost of, and urgent need for, prevention with available local or regional data – or point to these U.S. figures to demonstrate indicative cost and expose the need for more local or regional data.

If you are building a policy case, you can go one step further – from demonstrating the nominal cost savings of prevention, to showing projected cash realization by budget.

300x

Child sexual abuse is a unique risk factor for mood disorders such as depressive disorders, and anxiety disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder; 200-to-300 times higher among survivors relative to the general population⁴.

\$9.2 billion

In the U.S., child sexual abuse costs \$9.2 billion annually, comprised of health care costs, child welfare costs, crime costs, suicide costs, and productivity losses among survivors⁵.

\$370k

Children who are abused earn less over the course of their lifetimes – \$283,000 in 2015, \$371,783 adjusted for inflation in 2023⁶.

The prevention of child sexual abuse is a moral imperative. It exacts an unacceptable human and societal cost. Intervening before harm occurs is the right thing to do, and it is also the smart thing to do.

⁴Noll JG. Child Sexual Abuse as a Unique Risk Factor for the Development of Psychopathology: The Compounded Convergence of Mechanisms. *Annu Rev Clin Psychol*. 2021 May 7;17:439-464. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-081219-112621>. Epub 2021 Jan 20. PMID: 33472010; PMCID: PMC9301660

⁵⁶Letourneau, E. J., Brown, D. S., Fang, X., Hassan, A., & Mercy, J. A. (2018). The economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 79, 413–422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.02.020>

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4 LANDSCAPE: Policy/Project/Funding

Understanding the existing prevention landscape is important when identifying the highest potential opportunities for new policies, projects, or funding. This process also helps to avoid duplication, explore evidence of effectiveness, and reveal synergies. In your mapping, think about:



Existing prevention initiatives
+ cost



Adjacent initiatives
+ cost



Relevant research projects
+ cost



National/regional strategies

5 OPPORTUNITY: Policy/Project/Funding

Depending on levels of ambition, risk appetite, and available resources, you may need to consider a wide range of interventions – varying by intended target population, public profile, and level of independence from other existing initiatives. For example:

Primary

Universal interventions that target children and young people – often based in schools or youth-serving organizations. These types of prevention initiatives are designed to intervene before the onset of problematic sexual behavior.

Secondary

Interventions targeting those at risk of perpetration. These initiatives aim to identify and treat individuals before they cause harm. Often the target population will be young people and adults with problematic sexual behavior and/or unwanted sexual interest in children.

Tertiary

Interventions that engage with individuals who have been convicted for perpetration of child sexual abuse. These initiatives are designed to manage offender behavior and prevent further harm.

Standalone

Do you have the public, political, or board-level appetite to implement a standalone and distinct prevention intervention? In many countries, the stigma associated with child sexual abuse is a barrier to implementing initiatives with the explicit aim of preventing child sexual abuse. It is important to assess the feasibility of this type of approach.

Bundling/Braiding

One programmatic way to mitigate stigma and reticence, is to bundle or braid prevention with larger, less stigmatized, initiatives. For example, this approach could see prevention-focused interventions integrated into adjacent health-focused public services. Or existing education interventions enhanced with prevention-focused curricula.

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6 IMPACT & RISK

When building a case for prevention, we need to be able to point to potential impact. To establish credibility, we also need to be able to recognize risk – whether programmatic, reputational, or financial. If you have projections of impact, use them. If not, consider pointing to indicative impact from similar prevention interventions.

20% In the six largest US youth serving organizations (YSOs), a variety of safeguarding interventions and systems have led to a drop in victimization by an average of 20% across two cohorts of adults, aged 18-22 and 32-36⁷.

RISK REGISTER

Description	Category	Inherent			Mitigation	Residual			Action
		Likelihood	Impact	Overall Exposure		Likelihood	Impact	Overall Exposure	



7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are only as compelling as the case upon which they are built. Check that your recommendations reference sources of data, emphasize the cost of inaction, take account of material risks, and champion projected impact.

⁷Assini-Meytin, L. C., McPhail, I., Sun, Y., Mathews, B., Kaufman, K. L., & Letourneau, E. J. (2024). Child Sexual Abuse and Boundary Violating Behaviors in Youth Serving Organizations: National Prevalence and Distribution by Organizational Type. Child Maltreatment <https://doi.org/10.1177/107755952412907>



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