

Summary of Proposed Prevention Goals and Actions for Pittsfield Public Schools

GOAL #1: Educate all Pittsfield School employees to identify and respond to adult interactions with children that might be precursors to sexual misconduct or abuse.

Proposal #1: Adopt the “*Enough! Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in My School*” online, evidence-based course to educate all Pittsfield School employees.

Proposal #2: Conduct in-person training on Problematic Sexual Behaviors (PSB) of children and adolescents for designated Pittsfield school staff.

GOAL #2: Educate Junior and Senior High School students about child sexual abuse and its prevention.

Proposal #1: Implement the “*It’s Not Just Jenna*” training in Health Education Classes.

Proposal #2: Adopt a comprehensive **Code of Conduct** for Pittsfield Junior and Senior High School students.

Proposal #3: Educate students about how to prevent online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Proposal #4: Adopt the “*Student Safety Posters*” to support the safety of younger students.

GOAL #3: Strengthen Pittsfield School Policies/Practices to prevent employee sexual misconduct and abuse.

Proposal #1: Complete the Enough Abuse “*School Assessment Survey*” to identify strengths and gaps in current policies and practices.

Proposal #2: Adopt a comprehensive **Code of Conduct** for Pittsfield School employees and volunteers.

Proposal #3: Strengthen and standardize **Screening Protocols** for prospective employees.

GOAL #4: Educate Pittsfield School parents about preventing child sexual abuse.

Proposal #1: Make the “*Enough!*” online training course available for the parents of students.

Proposal #2: Distribute “*Straight Talk About Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Guides for Parents*” to the parents of all students.

GOAL #5: Engage Pittsfield-Area communities in preventing child sexual abuse.

Proposal #1: Convene a virtual meeting/training on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse for Pittsfield-area parents and residents.

Proposal #2: Educate Pittsfield-Area parents and residents about child sexual abuse prevention by publishing the 20 “*Tips For Parents*” series in local print and online media.

Proposal #3: Promote the Pledge to Prevent® online prevention action campaign through local media, outdoor advertising, businesses, and libraries.

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January 2025

Proposed Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Action Plan for Pittsfield Public Schools and Community

GOAL #1: Educate all Pittsfield School employees to identify and respond to adult interactions with children that might be precursors to sexual misconduct or abuse.

A U.S. Department of Education-commissioned report in 2004 indicated that **3.5 million (6.7%) students** report unwanted ***direct sexual contact*** with someone in their school - in 1/3 of cases a teacher or coach. Substitute teachers, bus drivers, security personnel, principals and counselors were among other employees engaged in direct sexual misconduct or abuse. When ***non-touching sexual offenses*** were included, the percentage of students exposed to sexual misconduct rose to **4.2 million or 10%**. Examples of non-touching sexual offenses included sending illicit texts or photos, making suggestive comments, etc. (Shakeshaft, 2004)

Almost 20 years later, educator sexual misconduct remains a growing problem. In a 2023 survey of 6,632 recent high school graduates, **nearly 12 percent or 1 in 8.5** reported having experienced at least one form of educator sexual misconduct during grades K-12. (Jeglic, 2023)

Yet, two-thirds of teachers don't receive training in preventing, recognizing, or responding to child sexual abuse, either in their college coursework, or as part of their professional development. A study of teachers found the most common reasons for not reporting suspected child sexual abuse was their lack of confidence in their ability to identify and to respond appropriately to suspicions. The need to educate all school personnel about child sexual abuse and how to early identify and prevent it could not be more compelling.

Proposal #1: Adopt the “*Enough! Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in My School*” online course to educate all Pittsfield School employees.

“Enough! Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in My School” is a one-hour, interactive and evidence-based training hailed as the most comprehensive online training for this audience on this topic. A published randomized control study of teachers in three states confirmed significant gains in knowledge about child sexual abuse prevention, ability to identify boundary-violating behaviors early, and confidence and willingness to report suspected or disclosed cases. Over 98% of teachers said they would recommend the course to their colleagues. Endorsed by the U.S. Department of Justice, the course receives high praise from superintendents, principals, teachers and other school staff. To date, over 10,000 employees in 112 Massachusetts schools have completed the course.

The following tools are intended to be distributed to all school staff in conjunction with their completion of the *Enough!* online course:

“Are You Crossing the Line with a Student?” This self-administered assessment tool helps adults identify thoughts and behaviors that might pose a potential threat to the children they serve and to their own role as a teacher or school employee. Also, in the series: **“Are You Crossing the Line with a Student Athlete? A Self-Assessment for Coaches.”**

“25 Boundary Violating Behaviors” This 3-page resource is intended to be distributed to all school staff as a quick reference to help them identify and stop inappropriate behaviors of adults that, if left unchecked, could escalate to sexual misconduct and/or illegal sexual offenses.

Proposal #2: Conduct in-person trainings on Problematic Sexual Behaviors of children and adolescents (PSB) for designated Pittsfield school staff (administrators, school guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, school nurses.)

“Understanding & Responding to Sexual Behaviors of Children and Adolescents” is an interactive training curriculum developed by Enough Abuse to prevent child-on-child sexual abuse, which researchers indicate may represent 70% or more of substantiated cases reported to authorities. It is intended for schools, and early education and care professionals, and others who have direct contact with children and/or their families.

Elements include how to: identify “developmentally expected” sexual behaviors of children and youth; distinguish developmentally expected behaviors from problematic sexual behaviors (PSB) that might be inappropriate, concerning, abusive, or illegal; respond to all sexual behaviors in ways that promote healthy development of children; identify “yellow light” behaviors of children and teens that require correction and monitoring and “red light” behaviors that require referral or reporting to local child protection agencies.

GOAL #2: Educate Junior and Senior High School students about child sexual abuse and its prevention.

Proposal #1: Implement the “It’s Not Just Jenna” training in Health Education Classes.

“It’s Not Just Jenna” is a powerful 30-minute video with an accompanying 30-slide “Learning and Discussion Guide” that facilitates post-viewing discussion about the lessons Jenna’s story teaches us about child sexual abuse and how to prevent it. Included are: behavior signs to be aware of in adults that might indicate they pose a risk to children and teens; ways sexual abusers “groom” or establish trust with potential victims and their families; sexual abuse behavior signs to look for in children or teens; how to respond if we see behavior signs in an adult that indicate they might pose a risk to children and teens, etc.

The video and interactive discussion can be facilitated by Enough Abuse, or a designated school staff (social worker, counselor, health education teacher, etc.) can be trained to support the schools' in-house capacity to conduct the trainings and discussion.

Proposal #2: Educate students about how to prevent online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Recent increases in the demand for and reporting of “**online child sexual abuse material**” (**CSAM**), have been unprecedented and are increasing exponentially. According to a 2022 study, 1 in 6, or 16% of young adults in the U.S. have experienced at least one type of sexual abuse online before the age of 18. Over two-thirds of offenders are people known to them offline, including peers and intimate partners (Finkelhor et. al, 2022). Recent research also shows that 44% of offenders of online abuse against children were under 18. (Sutton and Finkelhor, 2023). Two-thirds of online sexual imagery of children appear to have been produced in the home.

“**Sexting**,” the sending of sexually explicit, nude/seminude pictures via text message or social media messaging apps has increased, especially among teens. These images are violations of Massachusetts laws as they are legally considered “child sexual abuse material.”

“**Sextortion**,” is a form of child sexual exploitation where children are threatened or blackmailed, most often with the possibility of sharing with the public nude or sexual images of them, by a person who demands additional sexual content, sexual activity or money from the child. Dozens of cases of suicide by youth have been reported in response to their facing sextortion threats or having their images posted.

Passage of H4744, “An Act to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation” signed by the Governor in June 2024 requires the development of an educational diversion program for adolescents engaged in producing or distributing CSAM, the materials from which shall be “*made available to school districts for use in educational programs on the topic of possessing or disseminating sexual images*”. Enough Abuse can monitor the development of these prevention tools and facilitate their implementation in Pittsfield Public Schools when made available for piloting.

Proposal #3: Adopt a comprehensive Code of Conduct for Pittsfield Junior High and Senior High School students.

Enough Abuse has developed “*Code of Conduct for High School Students – A Model Policy Guide*” The 12-page Policy Guide is intended to strengthen current school policies relating to inappropriate adult staff and student conduct, as well as conduct between and among students.

A 2019 survey found that in cases of child sexual abuse, “*most offenses are at the hands of other juveniles (76.7% for males and 70.1% for females), primarily acquaintances, and occurring more frequently for adolescents aged 14–17.*” (Gewirtz-Meydan and Finkelhor, 2019).

Adopting a Code of Conduct for Junior and High School students that details healthy interactions between students, students and staff, as well as behaviors that undermine safety is essential to any school because it can:

- ✓ Protect children from sexual misconduct/abuse and its devastating impact on their health, mental health, social/emotional learning and their academic performance and achievement;
- ✓ Protect students, employees, contractors and volunteers by increasing their self-awareness of and ability to correct behaviors that might violate safe boundaries;
- ✓ Protect the school from the trauma, negative publicity, and potential legal liability that can result from incidents of sexual abuse.

Proposal #4: Adopt the “Student Safety Posters” to support younger students in reaching out to trusted adults when they feel unsafe in their home, school or community.

Enough Abuse has produced a **Student Safety Poster** to encourage children who feel unsafe to tell a trusted adult, e.g. parent, teacher, school resource officer, school nurse, counselor, etc. or call the Child-at-Risk line for help. The 18”x24” posters are intended to be posted in schools, youth-serving organizations and anywhere children are served. The posters are endorsed by the MA Association of School Superintendents and the MA School Nurses Organization.

GOAL #3: Educate Pittsfield School parents about preventing child sexual abuse.

Proposal #1: Make the “*Enough!*” online training course available for the parents of students.

Pittsfield Public Schools could offer the *Enough!* online course to the parents of current students, so they themselves can become knowledgeable about the issue and understand how school faculty and staff are being trained to address the problem. Local businesses or foundations could be tapped for funds to underwrite the \$20/learner cost, so parents can take the course at no charge. Enough Abuse can assist the school in submitting a funding proposal to support this activity. (We successfully secured such grants for the cities of Lynn and Lawrence.)

Proposal #2: Distribute “*Straight Talk About Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Guides for Parents*” to the parents of all students.

“*Straight Talk About Child Sexual Abuse*” gives parents the information, skills and confidence they need to strengthen safety within their homes, and to reduce the risks of sexual abuse in their communities. The 16-page resource supports parents who have not spoken to their children or teens about body boundaries because they feel they don't know enough, don't know what to say,

or how to approach the subject. Equipped with this booklet, parents can gain the knowledge and skills to help protect their child or teen from sexual abuse and its devastating consequences.

“Straight Talk: A Prevention Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities” is also available for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to support them with the information they need to keep their children safe. Children with developmental, physical or behavioral disabilities are at significantly higher risk of sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers. This resource can be made available to parents of children with disabilities in print or as a downloadable resource.

GOAL #4: Strengthen Pittsfield School Policies/Practices to prevent employee sexual misconduct and abuse.

Proposal #1: Complete the “School Assessment Survey” to identify strengths and gaps in current policies and practices.

The Enough Abuse “**School Assessment Survey**” includes 60 questions in 7 categories that members of a school leadership team can fill out individually or in a guided group process to identify policy strengths and also gaps to be addressed to improve child safety. Survey results can be reviewed by Enough Abuse and a brief report produced highlighting areas of strength and areas where policies are either lacking or could be improved. This can assist Pittsfield Public Schools in identifying specific priorities and timelines for their implementation.

Proposal #2: Adopt a comprehensive Code of Conduct for Pittsfield School employees and volunteers.

When school personnel, students and parents are aware of behaviors that violate the appropriate boundaries between adults and students, they can report violations *before* they can ever escalate to sexual abuse. That places individuals on notice that their behavior is inappropriate, unacceptable and must be corrected. It provides an opportunity for administrators to guide personnel in their professional development without having to make judgements about whether the individual’s behavior is sexually motivated or simply the result of a lack of self-awareness about poor boundaries.

Being made aware of these behaviors lets students know they never have to accept any behaviors from adults that make them feel uncomfortable, even from those in positions of power or who are well-liked or popular. It lets parents know how to support their school as a safe haven where their children can learn and grow without the threat of sexual abuse.

Enough Abuse has developed “***Code of Conduct for Schools: A Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy Guide***”. The 24-page Code of Conduct details appropriate adult/child interactions, as well as a listing of 30 inappropriate or boundary-violating behaviors that, if not interrupted, could be precursors to illegal sexual offenses. The Code include: the “Three is NOT a Crowd” Safety Rule; Rules for Restrooms, Locker Rooms, Changing Areas; Outings/Overnight Trips; and Social Media and Electronic Communications. It defines sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment and provides guidance to administrators about policies to address whistleblower protections, monitoring and reporting, and the dissemination of the Code to parents and the community. An Acknowledgement Statement is included for staff to sign to indicate they will abide by the Code and will notify designated supervisors when boundary violations are observed.

Proposal #3: Strengthen and standardize the screening of prospective school employees.

While criminal and fingerprint background checks are a necessary part of the due diligence schools should conduct before hiring prospective employees, they are insufficient to screen away those who may pose a sexual risk to children and teens. National risk assessment experts indicate that more than 80% or more of those charged with sexually abusing children in schools had no prior criminal records.

Abusers pride themselves in building the trust of the adults and children around them, selecting children or teens they believe will be less likely to tell. They work hard not to get caught.

To address this risk, schools are now moving to standardize their screening process to require applicants to provide information about any past or pending investigations or findings of sexual misconduct and to disclose whether professional licensure was revoked or surrendered as a result of an investigation. Enough Abuse can provide Pittsfield Public Schools with a “*Model Disclosure Form*” the school can adopt as part of its review and vetting of prospective new hires.

Additionally, Enough Abuse can provide to Pittsfield Public Schools a model script for a video that can be easily produced to serve as a powerful screening tool for all prospective employees. It would communicate the school’s mission to applicants, emphasizing its commitment to protecting children from sexual misconduct or abuse by any employee. The video is intended to be shown during the interview process with the interviewer present to observe any reaction.

Policies that should be prohibited by schools include the practice referred to as “*passing the trash*”, i.e. allowing an employee engaged in sexual misconduct to resign rather than face disciplinary action or a formal report to authorities, and often providing an employee with good references as part of a confidential agreement. Enough Abuse proposes to provide technical assistance to Pittsfield Schools to adopt a range of prevention policies/practices in this area.

GOAL #5: Engage Pittsfield Area communities in preventing child sexual abuse.

Proposal #1: Convene a virtual Meeting/Training on preventing child sexual abuse for Pittsfield-area parents and residents.

A virtual Meeting/Training would be a useful way to reach parents and other interested adults across the Pittsfield area. Enough Abuse proposes to deliver a virtual training of “*Enough Abuse: Strategies for Your Family and Community*” with promotional support from the school, local organizations and the media.

Proposal #2: Educate Pittsfield Area residents about child sexual abuse prevention through publication of the 20 “Tips For Parents” series.

Enough Abuse’s 20 “**Tips For Parents**” series educates parents and the public about ways to keep children and youth safe from adult sexual misconduct and abuse. The series was adopted by the *Sandwich Enterprise* which has published a new “Tip” in its weekly editions since September 2024. *Mashpee* and *Bourne Enterprise* editors are also running the Tips and reaching an even larger on line audience. Enough Abuse proposes to reach out to local area print and online news media to engage them in this initiative.

Proposal #3: Promote the Pledge to Prevent® online prevention action campaign through local media, outdoor advertising, businesses, and libraries.

Pledge to Prevent® is a unique online campaign developed by Enough Abuse that empowers individuals to get educated about child sexual abuse and to take concrete, practical actions to prevent it in their homes and communities. Each visitor to the site can choose one of over 25 pledges as either a *Learner* to get the basic facts, a *Prevention Influencer* to share their knowledge with others, a *Safe Community Promoter* to engage schools and youth organizations, or a *Movement Builder* to promote prevention legislation and policies.

To build their knowledge and confidence to carry out their selected prevention action, pledgers immediately receive an email with 3-5 resources matched to their specific pledge. Over 30 booklets, videos, posters, reports, etc. are included in the pool of resources. “Pledge Ambassadors” can set target pledge goals for their group, club, church or community. Graphics are available for materials aimed at promoting the Pledge through local media, outdoor advertising, businesses, and libraries, including the Berkshire Athenaeum, the Berkshire Law Library and the Jonathan Edwards Library at Berkshire Community College.

The Pledge is a great way to engage family members, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, high school students, professionals, city leaders, youth organizations, legislators, police, child welfare workers, etc. in concrete, practical efforts to prevent child sexual abuse.