

Erin's Law: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Erin's Law?

A: Erin's Law (in Illinois, Public Ac 96-1524) mandates that Illinois public schools provide training to certified staff on prevention of child sexual abuse. It also mandates that public school children pre-kindergarten through 12th grade be educated on body safety rules and how to protect themselves from a predator.

Q: What will my child learn in these lessons?

A: Lesson content varies with the age of the child. The focus of lessons for pre-K and Kindergarten students is indentifying body parts and feelings. 1st through 3rd grade will learn about personal body safety rules, safe touches, and defining safe people. 4th through 6th grade will continue to reinforce the body safety rules, body boundaries, safe touches, good vs. bad secrets, identifying a safe person, and advocating for themselves.

Q: Who teaches the lessons?

A: Lessons will be taught by the school social worker and school psychologist. The classroom teachers will be present for the lesson as well.

Q: When will the lessons be taught?

A: Lessons will be taught the week of December 14th.

Q: Do I have the right to refuse and opt out?

A: We hope all parents will partner with us to educate our children. Please contact the principal if this is a concern. Parents have also asked questions about participation for a child who has been abused; we will work with parents of students on an individual basis to make the best decision for the student.

Q: How will staff be trained?

A: All staff was trained in November by the school social worker and school psychologist. They had the option to preview all materials being used to teach students. They learned about the warning signs of sexual abuse and how those signs differ depending on the age of the child. They also learned what to do and what not to do if a child discloses to them as well as how to report potential sexual abuse.

Q: What happens when a child discloses to a staff member?

A: Just as for any other circumstance in which a child reports or a staff member discovers any kind of abuse, staff members are mandated reporters. That means they are required to make a report to DCFS. Parents may also be contacted.

Q: How does the reporting process work?

A: Illinois law requires the person who has first-hand information to be the person who makes the report. An administrator, school social worker, or school psychologist may sit with a staff member while the report is made. During the report, DCFS takes basic identifying information as well as information on what the staff member saw or heard. By law, staff does not investigate claims made by children—that is solely the role of DCFS and law enforcement.

Q: As a parent, what is my role?

A: Parents are vital partners in the fight against child sexual abuse. Parents can help reinforce and clarify concepts that children learn in sexual abuse prevention programs. Communicating with your child about body safety can potentially decrease the changes of children keeping abuse a secret (Fieldman & Crespi, 2002).

Additional Resources: www.erinslaw.org www.erinslawillinois.org www.ncsl.org