

# Optimizing Child Safety In Your Organization

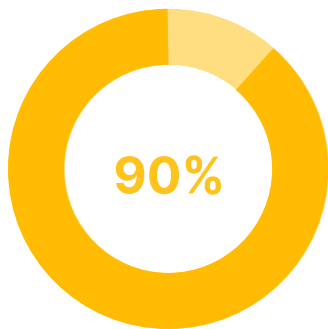


## CHAPTER ONE

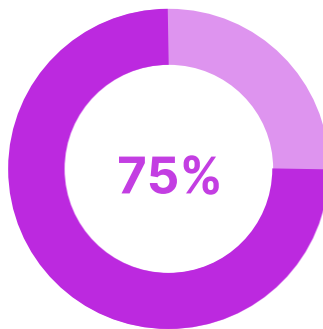
# WHY FOCUS ON CHILD SAFETY?

Child safety is important to families, and parents expect their children to be protected while in your care. However, to be effective, child safety must be part of the culture, with the whole organization, including leadership, committed to the cause. The data makes it clear why a focus on increasing child safety in organizations is needed.

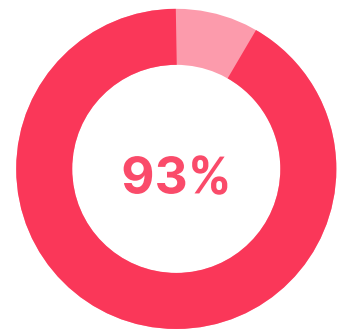
- Less than **10%** of child sexual abusers are criminally prosecuted
- Meaning **90%+** will have NO red flags



of child predators  
identify as  
religious or highly  
religious



of child sexual  
predators attend  
church regularly



of child victims  
know their  
perpetrator in  
some way



In addition to the data, there are other factors to consider.

✔ **False Assumptions** - These dangerous assumptions give a false sense of security, create an environment where predators thrive, and are frequently used as an excuse.

- Tightly held beliefs that reduce child safety
- It won't happen here mentality – we're safe
- I would know if someone wanted to harm children – our organization is small
- I don't need to check backgrounds – I know everyone
- I would know a child predator if I saw one – they are easy to spot

✔ **Lack of a Child Protection Policy (CPP):**

- A set of guidelines describing how you intend to protect children
- Provides a defined set of working principles
- Operating without one is a bad idea and sets organizations up for an incident

✔ **Incomplete Vetting of Staff & Volunteers:** There are significant risks in not scrutinizing every person with direct access to children.

- Know who they are, examine backgrounds, follow up on experience, get feedback on character
- Not doing so doubles the risk of incidence
- Not doing so allows someone with bad intentions easy access
- Follow the 7 Comprehensive Screening Steps

✔ **Allegation of Abuse:**

- The #1 reason organizations caring for kids and youth are taken to court
- Can do irreparable damage internally and externally
- Reduce likelihood by setting up safety systems and prevention practices

## CHAPTER TWO

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# PREDATOR PROOFING YOUR ORGANIZATION

Protecting your organization from predators is one of the most critical steps to improving child safety. But “how” and “why” do predators target organizations? What actions can you take to protect kids?

### Who Are They?

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- ✓ Friends, family, acquaintances, community leaders, business owners, volunteers, teachers, the list goes on
- ✓ There is no stereotype
  - Both young and old and from different walks of life with diverse levels of education, economics, family structures, history, and experience
- ✓ 80-90% are male offenders, and 10-20% are female
- ✓ Often identify as religious or highly religious and attend church regularly
- ✓ Participate at all levels of an organization and actively seek leadership roles

### Environments They Seek

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Predators look for safety breakdowns such as:

- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Lack of screening
- ✓ Secrecy
- ✓ Unrestricted access
- ✓ Zero accountability

- ✓ Low transparency/minimal discussion
- ✓ Lack of ongoing training & education

## Evolution of the Grooming Model

Grooming is a technique used by predators to create relationships, earn trust, and bring down barriers to gain access. Predators know if they are integrated, well-liked, and keep their behaviors in check, they will be less likely to be identified. It will also be difficult to speak against them if an accusation arises.

The grooming model has changed with the internet and mobile connectivity.

### THEN

- ✓ Transitions from place to place for easy access
- ✓ Grooms single victim over short time
- ✓ Hides in the shadows at low levels of organization
- ✓ Isolated and alone
- ✓ Works alone
- ✓ No online education
- ✓ Limited access to virtual networks and communities

### NOW

- ✓ Integrates into community and establishes a presence with authority
- ✓ Targets families, board members, those in authority
- ✓ Leverages leadership position to increase access
- ✓ Befriends other predators, develops communities of like-minded individuals
- ✓ Works in groups, shares information about targets, victims, methods
- ✓ Uses online education to increase knowledge of victims & targets
- ✓ Uses social media to develop online communities, share ideas, identify victims, evaluate targets



## Prevention Is Key

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Predators work to gain authority and trust, combined with access and control to victimize. So how do you prevent and protect the children in your care? A key point is perpetrators' behaviors are highly repetitive and predictable.

The most effective way to protect is to prevent a predator from entering your organization. This can be done by creating policy and prevention tactics to reduce isolation and increase accountability. By reducing isolation and increasing accountability, you lower the risk of abuse and make it more difficult for predators at any level to operate.

### **Top prevention methods:**

- ✔ A well-written safety plan
- ✔ Prioritize training & education
- ✔ Screening process
- ✔ Encourage transparency & prioritize communication
- ✔ Don't be afraid to say NO
- ✔ Make known your organization's commitment to child protection

### **Protective measures or safety guidelines to have in place:**

- ✔ Utilize a child protection policy
- ✔ Have a youth screening policy
- ✔ Establish restroom procedures
- ✔ Institute transportation guidelines
- ✔ Check-in and out process
- ✔ Clearly define classroom policy & expectations

## CHAPTER THREE

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# COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING

All child-serving organizations seek to attract safe individuals to be around children and eliminate those with the potential to cause harm. Reliable, committed volunteers, staff, and leadership are essential to making an organization safe. Investing the time it takes to screen candidates comprehensively is crucial.

### Top Benefits of Screening

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- ✓ **Acts as a deterrent for bad behavior** – A child predator will think twice before completing the screening process, knowing others will thoroughly vet them. Most predators won't waste time infiltrating an organization committed to prioritizing child safety and using a rigorous screening process.
- ✓ **Provides a multi-dimensional assessment** – Comprehensive screening evaluates a candidate from different perspectives by including others who participate in the interview processes.
- ✓ **Eliminates easy access to kids and youth** - Ensuring everyone with direct access to kids/youth functions with a working set of guidelines that minimize the grey area of interacting.
- ✓ **Bubbles up need to know information about a candidate's character and experience**

✔ **Establishes due diligence** - Provides a layer of protection for the organization.

✔ **Save time and money** - Remove people early on who are not a good fit for your organization.

## The Seven Screening Elements

Important assumptions associated with the screening elements include:

1. Individuals who work directly with children
2. Adults 18+ years old
3. Evaluation is for a volunteer or paid staff position

### 1. The Application

Whether online or handwritten, this is the foundational piece for the remaining six elements and includes the core data required for you to make an informed decision.

It should always be 100% completed. Many applications are turned in with under 50% of the needed information – this is unacceptable. If an applicant is unwilling to complete the required information, that is a red flag.

Completed applications should be kept in a secure and locked location, either in hard copy or digital form. It's important whoever has access to





the information keeps it private, and the fewer people who have access to applicant information, the better.

## **2. Background Check**

The background check is the second most crucial element. It's not a silver bullet and can often lead to a false sense of security if it's the only action to evaluate a candidate. Leadership should establish which positions will require a background check.

Background checks should be completed every 12 to 24 months, depending on the person's role with kids and youth. Conducting a local, state, and criminal check is always best. The national criminal database, the state sex offender registry, and the national child abuse archive require an applicant's fingerprints.

## **3. Social Media Check**

Social media is new for many organizations as a data point for evaluating candidates. Many people communicating via social media, combined with the growing trend of organizations using it to get their message out, prove it has staying power and is worth incorporating into the screening process.

Even though content posted on social media is public, it can be tricky when candidates have private accounts or other accounts under a different name. However, bottom line, social media is a valuable tool for learning more about an individual looking to work directly with kids.

## **4. References**

Checking references highlight past accomplishments and are a good indicator of future performance. In addition, speaking with others who have worked with the candidate helps confirm the information shared on the application, offers candid insights on skills and knowledge, and helps to determine if they are well suited for the role. Before checking references, obtain candidate consent to gather employment-related information. Be clear on who you wish to speak with, such as people who

have directly supervised the candidate and can speak to their history working with kids and youth.

## 5. The Interview

Conducting a face-to-face interview generates valuable information and allows assessment from different angles. Over the last few years, the interview process has changed. Today, organizations are using a combination of in-person and online interviewing, with some methods being completely virtual from start to finish. These changes increase flexibility for candidates and interviewers.

Whichever direction you choose, be sure to prep for both options and ensure candidates are informed of each step in the process. In advance, check the technology and tools used for the interview.

## 6. Motor Vehicle Report

The Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) is a valuable tool if the candidate will be responsible for shuttling kids and youth to and from your site. Also, it's an excellent way to ensure your candidate has a clean driving record and poses no danger. The Department of Motor Vehicles holds the records in each state. Unfortunately, there is no national database to search for driving records, so the check must be done in the state where the applicant has a



current driver's license. Also, the amount of information shared on an MVR varies by state.

## 7. The Waiting Period

Establishing a waiting period is essential. The waiting period is role-dependent and can last from thirty days to six months. A minimum of six weeks is recommended for candidates working directly with kids and youth. Although waiting can be difficult, especially if there's a shortage of volunteers or a big event, keep in mind the process is for the long term, and it's better to know you've made the correct decision. Setting a waiting period allows time for training, education, and the ability to see first-hand how they interact with families, staff, and leadership. In addition, personally seeing how someone integrates into your organization helps verify the data points collected throughout the screening process.

### The Why

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Reliable, committed, long-term volunteers and staff make an organization safe. That's why investing time and energy getting to know those applying to work directly with kids and youth is essential. While it's difficult to have 100% certainty, the chances of increasing child protection and reducing risk are evident with a defined screening process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Operating without a Child Protection Policy (CPP) is never a good idea. A CPP is a set of self-imposed guidelines that describes how an organization intends to protect and care for children.

Every child protection policy is unique and should act as a living document. It should be a large part of onboarding, job training, and continuing education; referenced often and updated as your environment changes.

### Purpose

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It ensures anyone working with children has a set of operating principles that minimize the grey area when interacting with kids. It increases child safety and offers a layer of protection for staff, volunteers, and leadership.

The two essential factors of a CPP are to decrease isolation and increase accountability. The risk of abuse increases when children are isolated or removed from everyday activities, and unfortunately, predators look for these opportunities. Therefore, one of the most fundamental guidelines of the CPP should be to ensure a child is never alone with an adult.



## Benefits

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- ✔ Increases safety and protection for children and youth
- ✔ Operates as a policy manual establishing healthy boundaries when interacting with kids
- ✔ Provides a layer of protection for staff, volunteers, and leadership
- ✔ Offers clear guidelines and details for incident response
- ✔ Opens the door for discussion on abuse prevention

## Elements

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Here are some of the most important elements of a child protection policy. While the list doesn't include every component, here are five to give you a sense of the fundamentals to consider.

- ✔ **Policy Parameters** – Indicate the scope of the child protection policy and how you intend to use it to set boundaries and establish responsibilities for staff and volunteers.
- ✔ **Screening Procedures** – This section should include the seven screening steps referenced in chapter 3 of the eBook on comprehensive screening. Also included should be details such as the frequency and type of background check, who will follow up on references and share the findings, and who will conduct the interview and make the final approval decision.
- ✔ **Training & Education** – Outlines staff and volunteers' required training and education before and during their time serving children.
- ✔ **Classroom Procedures** – Includes processes such as the two-adult rule, adult-to-child ratios, and guidelines for visibility, discipline, and physical touch.

- ✔ **Protective Rules & Safety Guidelines** – This section pertains to rules or guidelines that relate directly to increasing child protection and safety. These include illness, children’s check-in/out, restroom procedures, transportation guidelines, emergency response actions, abuse prevention policies for reporting and response, and a duty to warn strategy.

## Getting Started

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We will never eliminate 100% of the abuse, and no single policy works perfectly in every situation. When creating your policy, it’s essential to strike a balance between over-generalizing, being too vague, or overly detailed. Policies that are too detailed can lead to frustration or if too vague, personal interpretation. Your policy should be clear, concise, and easy to understand and implement.



## CHAPTER FIVE

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# THE CHECK-IN EXPERIENCE

The benefits of secure children's check-in extend beyond attendance tracking. Children's check-in improves child safety, increases data accessibility, helps you easily connect with families, and ensures you release children only to those approved to pick them up.

### Safety – The Foundation

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Child safety is vital, and certain tracking and safety measures are necessary. You must have accurate records of children checking in and out, know who is picking them up, verify they are authorized to do so, and be aware of allergy or medical concerns. Safety is a core component and the foundation upon which KidCheck is built.

- ✔ Matching security codes and watermark images on child and guardian badges
- ✔ Allergy and medical warnings on child name badges
- ✔ Authorized and unauthorized designations
  - Helpful with diverse family situations, court, restraining, no-contact orders
- ✔ An icon on the label designating if an unauthorized guardian is associated
- ✔ Quickly and easily locate and contact parents in case of emergency
- ✔ Reduce risk and liability with a layer of protection for kids, staff, and your organization

## First Impression – It's a Deal Breaker

A strong first impression will profoundly affect relationships with new and returning families. Children's check-in is the front door to your organization and impacts a family's decision to return. A bad check-in experience can be a deal breaker.

Families observe everything from the initial approach to the consistency of staff and volunteers following existing processes and systems. A first impression can determine whether your organization is trustworthy. Using an electronic check-in process makes a definitive statement right away that child safety is a top priority.

## Mobility – Convenient for Families

Mobile check-in options add flexibility and convenience for families. No waiting in line, no check-in station required, no intervention needed from your organization. KidCheck offers:

- ✔ **Express Check-In** – Families check-in using their mobile device. Parents start check-in from home, their car, or the parking lot; then upon arrival at your facility, child name badges and guardian receipts are prompted to print.
- ✔ **Mobile Check-In Station** – Add a personal touch, shorten check-in lines, and quickly check families in using a mobile device set up as the check-in station or carried by a volunteer/staff.
- ✔ **Roster Check-In** – Faster, easier check-in and out. Quickly and easily check kids in based on roster lists you create. There's no need for parents to complete the traditional check-in process.





## Data Management – At a Glance

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A key benefit of using electronic children’s check-in is the accessibility and customization you have with your data. You need quick, easy access to key data to understand trends better, speed up decision-making, and have information for ongoing operational analysis.

- ✔ More effectively follow up, save time, increase efficiency
- ✔ Gather and extrapolate important data with at-a-glance reports
  - Overall statistics, graphical charts, check-in logs, roster reports, contact information, attendance reports, ratio tracking, allergy reports, and more
- ✔ Better emergency management with immediate access to attendance records and child locations
- ✔ Gather vital information with surveys/questionnaires done electronically right at check-in
- ✔ Easier record retention with documents directly linked to child accounts
  - Waivers, court orders, incident reports, more

## Communication Tools

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It’s important to communicate with families consistently and with clarity. Electronic check-in makes communication simple, and KidCheck incorporates multiple options right in the system.

- ✔ **Text Messaging** – Quickly let parents know about an issue or emergency. Receive automatic child is checked in or out messages, especially helpful for youth or when a different guardian drops off or picks up.
- ✔ **Broadcast Text and Email** – Share information and quickly get the word out to a group of parents, volunteers/staff, or both. Perfect for emergencies, updates, and

change notifications. Attach documents, infographics, medical release forms, or whatever is needed.

- ✔ **Check-In Notes** – At check-in, parents can add comments or special instructions they want printed on a child’s name badge. For example, birthday information, feeding schedule, and additional medical or allergy info.
- ✔ **Check-In Announcements** – Allow staff to share information with all parents, or individual families, right on the check-in screen. Upcoming events, room changes, a reminder to bring diapers, or a follow-up message to welcome a family back.

## The Power of Technology

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At KidCheck, we strive to deliver a comprehensive check-in solution that is full-featured, easy to use, and scalable for your organization’s changing needs. Our goal is to leverage the power of technology to equip you with tools that improve daily operations and prioritize child protection while continuing to free you up to focus on the families you serve.

Learn more about KidCheck with a free personalized product demonstration and see first-hand the benefits of using secure children’s check-in. Go to [www.kidcheck.com](http://www.kidcheck.com) or give us a call at 208-538-2000.