

## ***Prevention / Child Wellbeing: Social-Emotional Functioning***

School-based interventions to prevent child abuse have mixed results on children’s social-emotional functioning.

<b>Evidence status</b>	Moderate risk of bias	Moderate strength evidence but results are mixed for social-emotional functioning.
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### **The summary in brief**

School-based interventions to prevent child abuse typically involve classroom-based courses and workshops for primary school children. The trainings aim to provide knowledge and skills to children to help them avoid becoming victims of child abuse and be empowered to disclose abuse when it happens. One outcome studied is the impact of these trainings on children’s social-emotional functioning. Another type of school-based intervention is to train teachers on better classroom management so that they are less violent towards children.

This cell has six primary studies; five are school-based and one is in a youth care institution. Two studies found that positive behaviours – including better conflict resolution skills, being more communicative and assertiveness – increase because of the training, as observed by parents and teachers. They did not find harms (e.g., increases in inability to sleep, fear of known and unknown adults). The other two studies found no such change after intervention.

The fifth study was to prevent adolescent boys living in residential homes from sexually harassing others. This study found no effect of the intervention.

The teacher training study did not find any increase in pro-social behaviours among children, although the intervention reduced teacher violence.

The completed primary studies vary vastly in age. They are all from high-income countries, plus Jamaica.

The one systematic review in this cell found that child abuse prevention programmes in schools incorporating social-emotional skills improve children’s knowledge about abuse but not self-protective skills.

### **Contents of the cell**

#### **A. Primary Studies**

The cell has six primary studies (one of which is 25 years old) and two protocols (both in low- and middle-income countries):

Baker-Henningham 2019 RCT, low risk of bias.	Jamaica (seven primary schools with 27 teachers). Children in first grade: Middle childhood (6-11 years).  Evaluation of a teacher training programme to improve classroom management.
Hebert 2001 QED, moderate risk of bias.	Canada (two schools in Quebec City). Children in first and third grades: Middle childhood (6-11 years).

	Evaluation of ESPACE child sexual abuse (and other abuse) prevention programme.
Daigneault 2012 RCT, moderate risk of bias.	Canada (three schools in Montreal). Children in first and third grades: Middle childhood (6-11 years).  Evaluation of <i>ESPACE</i> + booster (two years later) on violence prevention.
Taal 1997 QED, low risk of bias.	The Netherlands (Amsterdam elementary schools). Children in middle childhood (6-11 years).  Evaluation of <i>Right to Security</i> sexual abuse prevention programme.
van Lieshout 2019 RCT, high risk of bias	The Netherlands (20 youth care institutions). Adolescent boys (12-17 years of age).  Testing <i>the Make a Move</i> programme to prevent sexual harassment and promote respectful relationships for at-risk boys living in residential care.
del Campo Sanchez 2006 RCT, moderate risk of bias	Spain (primary schools). Primary school children: Middle childhood (6-11 years).  Evaluation of <i>Prevención de abusos sexuales a menores</i> , a child sexual abuse prevention programme.
Lopez Garcia 2021 RCT protocol, ongoing study	Haiti (primary schools).  Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T). a training programme to reduce corporal punishment by schoolteachers
Scharpf 2021 RCT protocol, ongoing study	Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda (primary and secondary schools).  Interaction Competencies with Children for Teachers (ICC-T). a training programme to reduce corporal punishment by schoolteachers

### The interventions

Programme	Country	Description
<i>ESPACE</i> (Hebert 2001)	Canada	Quebec's adaptation of the <i>American Child Assault Prevention (CAP)</i> program. Classroom workshops (60-75 minutes) delivered by specialised community workers to first and third graders. Role-play, guided discussion, behaviour modelling, and rehearsal are strategies used in workshop to teach children basic prevention concepts and skills and make them aware of their personal rights. Children are taught to be assertive, to yell in self-defence and are to reach out to friends and a trusted adult if any abuse occurs. The programme's focus is expansive, covering sexual abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and bullying. After the workshop, children can meet individually with community workers. Parents / guardians are also invited to a meeting and can also attend the workshop.

<p><i>ESPACE + booster</i> (Daigneault 2012)</p>	<p>Canada</p>	<p>The same <i>ESPACE</i> programme as described above was implemented in three low socioeconomic status Montreal public schools. Two years after the <i>ESPACE</i> programme, children currently in third and fourth grade (first and second grade during <i>ESPACE</i>) received either a complete <i>ESPACE</i> booster (same intervention again) or a brief version of it (to save time and money). Children currently in fifth and sixth grade (third and fourth grade during <i>ESPACE</i>) received a comprehensive intervention of <i>ESPACE</i> plus a general violence prevention workshop called <i>Confidence, Solidarity, Respect (CSR)</i>. <i>CSR</i> is meant to build on <i>ESPACE</i> and is more suited for older children.</p>
<p><i>Right to Security</i> (Taal 1997)</p>	<p>The Netherlands</p>	<p>The programme is an initiative of the Amsterdam Prevention Council for Sexual Violence. The Programme is delivered to students in grades six to eight. The themes include ‘yes’ or ‘no’ feelings; the right to refuse unwanted sexual behaviours; and the right to seek help if abuse occurs. The main goal is to empower the child to decide what is right and wrong. The programme includes eight lessons – three delivered by actors simulating various situations and the rest by teachers (who received training for this). The lessons are meant to facilitate the realisation of the goals of the programme. Parents are invited to an informative meeting before the programme is implemented.</p>
<p><i>Make a Move</i> (van Lieshout 2019)</p>	<p>The Netherlands</p>	<p>A sexual harassment prevention programme developed by the Dutch organisation Rutgers (Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) for boys (aged 12-17) living in Dutch youth care. It is delivered by freelance trainers. The main goals are respectful relationships and preventing sexual harassment. It has a cognitive-behavioural approach and tackles determinants of sexual harassment such as attitudes and socio relational skills. It consists of eight themed weekly meetings lasting 90 minutes each. The themes are “men, image, girls, sex, flirting, dating, pleasurable sex, and the future.” Roleplay, discussion, and video clips are used to engage participants. Credits are earned for participation and good manners, with the final winner getting a prize.</p>
<p><i>Prevención de abusos sexuales a menores</i> (del Campo Sanchez 2006)</p>	<p>Spain</p>	<p>The first of its kind, it was a school-based sexual abuse prevention programme in Spain. The Programme was delivered in classrooms to children aged 8-12 years. Teachers and parents received some training and orientation before the programme.</p>
<p>Teacher training programme for grade 1 teachers</p>	<p>Jamaica</p>	<p>School-based violence prevention programme for grade 1 teachers in various Jamaican primary schools. Teachers participated in workshops and received in-class support. The purpose of the programme was to help teachers improve classroom management with the twin goals of reducing violence against children and child aggression in the classroom.</p>

## Do the interventions work in improving children's social-emotional functioning?

The results are mixed.

Some findings were positive:

- Hebert 2001 reported that, two weeks after participating in *ESPACE*, most children did not show any negative side effects (sleeping problems; being socially isolated; fear of known / unknown adults; being disobedient; being clingy; being aggressive to siblings / peers) as observed by their parents. Some parents said their children seemed to be a little more afraid of strangers (25%) or clingier (13%). Note that the categories were "no change; a little; a lot." More aggressiveness was reported towards peers (14% a little; 1% a lot), siblings (20% a little; 9% a lot), and disobedience (21% a little; 8% a lot). Very few parents said that any of these were a problem (aggression towards siblings was highest at close to 10%). For positive effects, more than half the parents said their children were more forthcoming about what they liked (57%) and did not like (53%) and they showed more self-confidence (54%). Parents also said that their children dealt better with conflict situations (46%), were more assertive (47%), and showed greater autonomy (42%). These measures were not reported for the control group.
- Del Campo Sanchez 2006 found that after the programme, parents reported increases in children's positive behaviours such as asking more about sexual abuse (35%) and sexuality (27%); more open about their feelings (56%); and improving conflict management skills (42%). Teachers too observed increases in supporting peers (71%); being more assertive (43%); self-confidence, and conflict management skills (both 86%). The negative behaviours observed were minimal. Comparison group parents and teachers were not surveyed for these measures.
- Baker-Henningham 2019 found no benefits for pro-social behaviour, although teachers were less violent against children and the classroom environment improved.

Some studies found no effects:

- Daigneault 2012 found no significant effects on self-efficacy and empathy of the *ESPACE + booster* programme.
- Taal 1997 reported that subtest scores for "Relationships with Teacher" and "Relationships with Classmates" were unchanged one week and six weeks, after the programme, respectively. Social anxiety was unchanged at one week, but at six weeks a larger proportion of children rated their fear as 'low' (48% vs. 38%). This increase was in sixth and seventh graders since most eighth graders (52%) already considered themselves fearless!
- Van Lieshout 2019 did not find any significant effects on any of the 14 measures in the study. Those included self-efficacy, self-esteem, social norms, and empathy.

## Have the interventions been implemented at scale?

*ESPACE* appears to have been implemented on a large scale, reaching hundreds of thousands of Quebecers over the years. However, the other studies are based on smaller samples. *Make a Move* seems to have been developed recently (so it is probably not implemented at scale) as a prevention intervention for sexual harassment targeting at-risk youth living in residential care. The extent of the

implementation scale is unclear for either *Right to Security* or *Prevención de abusos sexuales a menores*. The teacher training programme in Jamaica was a small-scale research study.

### Which type of organisation delivered the intervention?

*ESPACE*, *Make a Move*, and *Right to Security* are delivered by community-based organisations. The details for *Prevención de abusos sexuales a menores* are not clear.

### What do the interventions cost?

None of the studies report the detailed costs of the intervention.

### How are the programmes meant to work? The theory of change

None of the studies mention a specific theory on which they are based.

### How reliable is the evidence?

Pretty reliable.

Taal 1997 is rated as having a *low risk of bias*; Hebert 2001, del Campo Sanchez 2006, and Daigneault 2012 are rated as having a *moderate risk of bias*; and van Lieshout 2019 is rated as a *high risk of bias*.

### Risk of Bias for Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)

Study (Author and year)	Overall risk of bias	Randomised process	Deviations from intended interventions	Missing outcome data	Measurement of the outcome	Selection of the reported result
Baker-Henningham 2019	Low risk of bias	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk
del Campo Sanchez 2006	Some concerns	Some concerns	Some concerns	Low risk	Low risk	Some concerns
Daigneault 2012	Some concerns	Low risk	Some concerns	Low risk	Low risk	Some concerns
van Lieshout 2019	High risk of bias	Some concerns	High risk	High risk	Some concerns	Some concerns

### Risk of Bias for Quasi-Experimental Designs (QEDs)

Study	Overall risk of bias	Confounding	Selection bias	Bias in intervention classification	Deviation from intended intervention	Missing outcome data	Measurement of the outcome	Selection of the reported result
Taal 1997	Low risk of bias	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Moderate risk	Low risk

Hebert 2001	Moderate risk of bias	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Moderate risk	Moderate risk	Low risk
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**B. Systematic Review** (Gubbels 2021)

**What is the systematic review about?**

*Gubbels 2021* is a systematic review with multiple meta-analyses to understand key components of effective school-based abuse prevention programmes.

**What are the findings on children’s social and emotional functioning outcomes?**

Programmes that focussed on the social-emotional skills of children were more effective in improving knowledge about abuse than those that didn’t. However, this was not the case for self-protection skills.

**What information is available on cost and cost-effectiveness?**

No information is provided on cost or cost-effectiveness.

**How reliable is the evidence?**

The systematic review is rated as ‘high risk of bias’. This means that it has at least one major flaw that affects our confidence in the finding.