

# “Erin’s Law” Parent Information

October 2015

# What is Erin's Law?

An Illinois law requiring:

- Age-appropriate child sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.
- Mandated for all Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students.

# Who is Erin?

“Erin’s Law” is named for Erin Merryn, who was sexually abused by both a neighbor and a cousin when she was a child. After going public about her abuse, Merryn made it her mission to advocate in favor of ensuring that children have the age-appropriate education to recognize and talk about sexual abuse. Her efforts have led to passage of a version of “Erin’s Law” in several states, including her home state of Illinois.

# Statistics

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be victims of child sexual abuse by their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 93% of the time children are abused by a person who is in a position of trust or authority.

Source: Illinois State Board of Education-Summary of Erin's Law task force May 2012

# How will Palos Heights District 128 address this law?

- Students grades Pre-K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will have information presented through “Talking about Touching-A Personal Safety Curriculum”
- Students grades 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> had a presentation on 9/30/15 by Imagination Theater entitled, “No Secrets.”

# Talking About Touching-A Personal Safety Curriculum

This program focuses on teaching children basic skills that will help them keep safe from dangerous or abusive situations. Adults can make every effort to provide a safe environment for children, but they cannot always be there to protect children from exposure to every dangerous or abusive situation. This curriculum provides rules, information, encouragement, and practice that children need to help protect themselves.

Source: "Talking About Touching"

# Parent Involvement

- ◎ Parent involvement is key
- ◎ As a parent you can:
  - Establish a safe environment.
  - Discuss touching safety.
  - Teach personal safety rules.
  - Respond to sexual abuse disclosure.

# Establish a Safe Environment

- ⦿ Check references for babysitters and child-care providers.
- ⦿ Notice the behavior of other adults around your child.
  - Be concerned about adults focused on child relationships more than adult relationships.
  - Adults singling out certain children for attention.



# Discuss Touch safety

- Answer your child's questions.
- Be approachable.
- Read a children's book about touching safety together.
- Start a conversation with your child.

# Teach Personal Safety Rules

- Introduce touching rules along with other safety rules.
- Talk about the rules often and practice them with your child.
- Agree on family touching rules to use with other children and adults. Decide how you will teach these rules based on your child's age, developmental level, and your own family values.

# Respond to Disclosure

- Remain calm.
- Reassure your child by saying, “It’s not your fault,” “I’m glad you told me,” “I’m always here for you.”
- Seek help for yourself and your child. Resources include law enforcement, Child Protective services, crisis hotline, and friends and family.

If there is a desire for further information  
or training, please contact:

Mary Beierle-District Nurse  
Nicol Bessette-Psychologist  
Joe Dinolfo-Counselor  
Annie Beyer-Social Worker

# Further resources:

- Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois (CACI)
- [www.erinslawillinois.org](http://www.erinslawillinois.org)
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services [www.state.il.us/dcfs/](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/)
- 1-800-25-ABUSE
- Stop It Now-<http://www.stopitnow.org/help>
- 1888-PREVENT