



## 2005 Advertising Campaign Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Isn't the sexual abuse of children a topic too sensitive for an advertising campaign?**

A: Child sexual abuse thrives in an atmosphere of secrecy. If we want to prevent the sexual abuse of children, adults concerned about their own thoughts or behaviors towards children need to know that there is help available and how to access it.

Communities often decide that in order to protect people's health and well-being, sensitive subjects need to be advertised publicly. Two recent examples are advertising campaigns to increase screening for breast cancer, and campaigns to promote safe sex to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS—both of which are now accepted as sensitive but important messages to protect health.

**Q. Why is it necessary to initiate an advertising campaign about this issue? Aren't there other ways to reach adults at risk of sexually abusing a child?**

A. Our research shows that there is the potential to reach adults who are contemplating sexually abusing a child, or who have already done so, with messages that may encourage them to seek treatment and be accountable. The most efficient way to reach this audience is through advertising. We urgently wish to reach this audience in order to prevent children from being harmed. The ad campaign is just one of the ways Stop It Now! Minnesota works to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

**Q. Who is funding the advertising effort?**

A. Stop It Now! Minnesota's programming, including this advertising effort, is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through Cooperative Agreement 522495. The content of the ads is the responsibility of Stop It Now! Minnesota and does not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC. We are seeking additional community support to sustain this advertising effort.

**Q. When will the ads appear? How long will the campaign continue?**

A. The ads will begin appearing the first week of November with a concentrated presence through December, and some advertising continuing into next year. We also hope to continue the campaign beyond that date through local funding.

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**Q. What are the risks of this advertising effort? Did you take them into account?**

A. We realize that these ads deal with a sensitive subject matter, and that there are risks in presenting these messages in a public way through advertising. The ads have the potential to provoke anxiety in people who have experienced sexual abuse. However, the ads were tested with survivors of child sexual abuse who felt strongly that the potential benefits of the ads (ending abuse and elevating the public discussion) outweighed the potential negative impact on survivors.

We are working with organizations that provide services to victims and survivors of sexual violence so they are aware of this campaign and are prepared to help people who contact them.

**Q. Do you really think anyone will call? Aren't people who sexually abuse children hopeless?**

A. People call our helpline every day. People who received specialized help can and do learn to control their behavior.

It's true that we ideally hope to reach people before they cross the line and harm a child. At the same time, our research shows that the majority of people engaged in this behavior want to stop but don't know how, or where to turn. The ads have been very carefully researched and prepared, and we are optimistic that we will make a difference in children's lives by encouraging people to seek help.

**Q: Why are you trying to reach a narrow population (people who are at risk to sexually abuse a child) with a mass media advertising effort?**

A. People who are at risk to abuse a child come from all walks of life. One of the difficulties we face as a society is that often the image of a person who sexually abuses a child (for example, a high-profile sex offender in a well-publicized case) doesn't fit with the actual data on who is most likely to be at risk to abuse a child. In the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area, 83% of child sexual abuse cases involved family and/or extended family members. So a person who might be a "good husband," a "good employee," or a prominent member of the community -- might also be sexually inappropriate or sexually abusive towards children and need professional help to control their behavior. We want to reach as many people as possible, and protect as many children as possible, with our message offering help and information.

**Q. How will you know if the advertising effort is successful?**

A. There are several quantifiable ways we can measure the effectiveness of the campaign. Among them: increased calls to the helpline, particularly from adults concerned about their own thoughts or behaviors towards children. We will be able to track calls from this ad campaign and we'll be tracking referrals and actions taken by callers. We'll also look at the number of visits to our web site. While this campaign is designed specifically to reach adults concerned about their own thoughts and behaviors towards children, we anticipate it will generate interest and reactions from anyone concerned about the sexual abuse of children.

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We expect the campaign to be controversial and to provoke conversations about who sexually abuses children, whether help is available, does treatment for sexual behavior concerns work, etc. We want people to know that there is hope and help for adults concerned about their own or someone else's sexual behaviors towards children.

**Q. Have other programs to prevent child sexual abuse tried a similar advertising approach?**

A. We are not aware of any campaigns in the United States targeted directly at the adult at risk to sexually abuse a child. We are aware of a program in Germany by doctors at the Institute for Sexology and Sexual Medicine at Berlin's renowned Charité Hospital. This program is funded by Volkswagen.

**Q. What other tactics does Stop It Now! Minnesota use to prevent child sexual abuse?**

A. Stop It Now! Minnesota focuses on what adults and communities can do to prevent the perpetration of child sexual abuse. We provide accurate and up-to-date educational materials to empower adults to stop and/or prevent the sexual abuse of children. We provide workshops for both adult audiences and for professionals working with families (e.g., child care providers, public health nurses, social service workers). Workshops focus on specific skills including how recognizing and responding to children's sexual behaviors prevents child sexual abuse, how to talk to someone whose behavior towards children concerns you, and what adults and communities can do to prevent the sexual abuse of children. We also do research, like the research done for the ad campaign, to identify policy and systems-level changes that have the potential to reduce the sexual abuse of children.