



Stop It Now!® Minnesota

Together We Can Prevent the Sexual Abuse of Children

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PRESS RELEASE

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Stop It Now!® Minnesota Launches Twin Cities Advertising Campaign to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

St. Paul, Minn., Oct. 26 — Stop It Now! Minnesota, a program dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse, today announced that it will begin a unique advertising campaign in November designed to reach adults at risk of sexually abusing a child. The campaign, which is based on research with the target audience, comprises a series of print ads and radio spots.

“The goal of this advertising campaign is simple: to prevent the sexual abuse of children,” said Yvonne Cournoyer, Program Director, Stop It Now! Minnesota. “We conducted extensive research to better understand what makes it harder or easier for adults at risk of sexually abusing a child to voluntarily come forward, seek treatment, be accountable for their actions and abstain from future abuse. The majority of research participants said they wanted to stop but didn’t know how. They also said they were afraid to reach out for help. The ads direct them to our website and our helpline—where they can get confidential information and referrals to help,” said Cournoyer.

“Minnesotans need to know that people who receive specialized treatment for child sexual abuse can and do learn to control their behavior,” said Cournoyer. “Our goal is get people to step forward and get treatment for their sexual behavior problems so that the abuse stops or ideally never starts.”

The ads address themes identified in the research as having the potential to persuade people to seek help: fear of discovery; the feeling of being miserable and out of control; the role of child pornography as “rehearsal” for more serious offenses; incest; and clearly identifying sexual attraction to children as harmful and illegal.

Stop It Now! Minnesota sought the input of child sexual abuse survivors, victim advocates, law enforcement officials and therapists during the campaign’s development.

“We realize that these ads deal with a sensitive subject matter,” said Cournoyer. “We have tried to balance the need for the ads to be direct and therefore to potentially change behaviors, with the sensitivities of the broader community.”

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The ads were tested with survivors of child sexual abuse who felt strongly that the potential benefits of the ads—ending abuse and elevating public discussion—outweighed the potential negative impact on groups such as survivors.

Sexual abuse of children is a problem in Minnesota. The 2004 Minnesota Student Survey found that 3 percent of sixth grade boys and 6 percent of girls answered yes to the question: Has any older person outside the family touched you sexually against your wishes or forced you to touch them sexually? One percent of boys and 3 percent of girls answered yes to the question: Has any older/stronger member of your family touched you sexually or had you touch them sexually?

Stop It Now! Minnesota's goal is to educate adults about ways to take action to prevent child sexual abuse before a child is harmed and before an adult, youth or child acts in a sexually inappropriate way towards a child. If adults are concerned with their own or someone else's sexual feelings or behaviors toward children, they can call Stop It Now! Minnesota's 1-888-PREVENT helpline (1-888-773-8368) to speak confidentially to a professional. More information is available at www.stopitnow.org/mn.