



# Understanding Erin's Law

A Parent's Guide

# What is Erin's Law?

Erin's Law is named after childhood sexual assault survivor, author, speaker and activist Erin Merryn, who is the founder and President of Erin's Law, which is registered with the State of Illinois and the IRS as a 501 (c)(4) non-profit social welfare organization.

In August 2019, New York State became the 37th state to sign Erin's Law into legislation. Erin's Law requires public schools to teach child sexual abuse and exploitation prevention classes to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Under the new law, all students must attend.

Source: [Erinslaw.org](http://Erinslaw.org)

# What are the district's requirements under the new legislation?

“Erin’s Law” requires that all public schools in each state implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program which teaches:

- **1** **Students** in grades K – 8th grade, age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and tell a trusted adult
- **2** **School personnel** all about child sexual abuse
- **3** **Parents & guardians** the warning signs of child sexual abuse, plus needed assistance, referral or resource information to support sexually abused children and their families

Source: Erinslaw.org



Can I opt my child out of the lessons?

**The NYS mandate does not allow for parents to opt their children out of the lessons presented.**

# What can parents do?

Talk to your child regularly about body safety:

- Start the conversation early: as soon as language starts and can be understood, it is a great time to begin.
- Talk to your child about trusting their intuition. That feeling in your tummy that something doesn't seem right likely isn't. Even if nothing has happened empower your child that they can leave a situation and find another safe adult. That might mean calling someone if they are alone with only one adult making them feel uneasy.

Abusers almost always tell a child to keep it a secret. They may tell them they will be in trouble if they tell anyone. Get across to your child they will not be in trouble. That this is not their fault. Abusers can threaten children to stay silent by saying they will hurt them or someone in their family. Let your child know no matter what they have been told you don't keep this is a secret. You will be protected once you report it. Teach them the differences between safe and unsafe secrets.

**Use simple language**

# Healthy Touches:

Talk to your kids about safe and unsafe touches.

Examples of safe touches:

- Giving a hug.
- Giving a high five.

Examples of unsafe touches.

- Touching your private parts.
- Getting kicked.
- Hair pulling.

Never force children to give hugs and kisses. Let them make that decision. Empower them to know they are the boss of their bodies and decisions about their body.

Make the conversation an ongoing one.



# Recognizing the signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse:

May include but not limited to:

- Nightmares
- Trouble sleeping
- Bed wetting
- Change in appetite
- Fear of certain people, places, activities
- Mood swings: rage, anger, fear, anxiety, insecure or withdrawn
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts
- Acting out sexually
- Exhibits adult sexual behaviors, knowledge, and language

# Signs more common in adolescents:

May include but not limited to:

- Eating disorders
- Self-injurious behavior
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Promiscuous activity
- Running away
- Suicidal (ideation/thoughts)
- Depression and anxiety
- Fear (unrealistic/abnormal)
- Change in academic performance



# Warning signs of a child being abused:

- A child receiving special attention; from one *human* consistently
- An adult creating opportunities to spend alone time with child
- Buying a child expensive gifts or giving them money
- Favoritism towards that child
- Physical affection towards that child: Kissing, hugging, holding hands, or wanting to be very close to a child

# What to do if a child discloses abuse:

1. Listen to the child
2. Thank them for sharing with you
3. Reassure them it is not their fault
4. Explain that you will work to develop a plan to keep them safe
5. Review confidentiality
6. Report abuse immediately

# Talking to your child about sexual predators:



# What is POB's Plan?

Our counselors along with our health/PE teachers will be co-teaching a lesson in grades K-8 during the month of May. Lessons will be age appropriate and will keep the focus on the most basic level of a safe touch versus an unsafe touch.

Students in grades 5-8 will also cover the topic of what healthy relationships look like.

We will make the connection to our Power of One lessons that the children are already familiar with. Students can always feel safe and comfortable going to their trusted adult in the school building.

# Who can I call if I need support?

Our mental health staff are here to help and always ready to support our families.

Please reach out to your school counselor or building principal if you would like more information about talking to your children about safe and unsafe touching.

**Judy Jacobs Parkway School - Ms. Clampitt, Principal 516-434-3358**

**Old Bethpage School - Ms. Gray, Principal 516-434-3419**

**Pasadena School - Ms. Heitner, Principal 516-434-3451**

**Stratford Road School - Ms. Psihogios, Principal 516-434-3389**

**Plainview-Old Bethpage Middle School - Dr. Bowman, Principal 516-434-3308**

**H.B. Mattlin Middle School - Dr. Coladonato, Principal 516-434-3250**