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[Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families](#) – Breaking the Silence on Child Abuse Protection, Prevention, Intervention, and Deterrence

Hearing Date: December 13, 2011

→→ [Watch the Hearing](#)

On Tuesday, members of the Senate came together with a panel of respected leaders in the child advocacy community to discuss how well current federal laws are working to protect children from abuse and neglect. They also examined:

- The prevalence of child sexual abuse committed by adults in entrusted organizations
- The effect abuse has on children and their families
- Why adults may fail to report known or suspected abuse
- Local and state efforts aimed at protecting, preventing, intervening, and deterring child abuse

The group focused on what is needed to strengthen existing laws to enable solutions that increase *protection, prevention, intervention and deterrence*. In her opening remarks, Sen. Mikulski poignantly said, "if you see something – do something." To do something we need to know the signs of abuse and what to do when we see it. The criticality of this was heightened with the statistics that:

- 700,000 reported cases of child abuse every year
- Of those 80,000 are sexually abused
- 71% of all sex crime victims are children
- On average a child has to tell 7-10 adults they have been abused before they are taken seriously

The subcommittee discussed the need to reform the [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act](#) (CAPTA) of 1974 to ensure the right policies are in place to protect our children. Senator Franken also talked about the [2003 Protect Act](#), which provided non-profit organizations with funding to conduct FBI background checks for volunteers serving children. Six percent of volunteers are turned away as a result of these checks. This is the first year it has not been renewed. The [Child Protection Improvements Act of 2012](#) (S.645/H.R. 1360) has been proposed to ensure it becomes permanent.

While background checks are necessary, they are not sufficient. It's important to educate volunteers. The group discussed the need to establish standards for training volunteers and those who work with children, ensuring adults have the tools to *see something and do something*.

What You Can Do

Take the [Stand Up for Kids](#) pledge to know the warning signs of child abuse and do something if you see it.

Tell your [Senator](#) and [House Representative](#) the Child Protection Improvement Act needs to be passed and [stay up to date](#) on its status.

Become familiar with the responsibilities of a [Mandatory Reporter](#) and decide to be one.

[Watch the full hearing](#) and download statements from the panel members.

Learn more [about laws being introduced in NY](#).

Subcommittee Panel Members

- Sheldon Kennedy, Former NHL player and Co-Founder, **Respect Group Inc.**, Alberta, Canada
- Michelle K. Collins, Vice President, Exploited Children Division & Assistant to the President, **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children**, Alexandria, VA
- Frank P. Cervone, Executive Director, **Support Center for Child Advocates**, Philadelphia, PA
- Erin Sullivan Sutton , Assistant Commissioner for Children & Family Services, Minnesota **Department of Human Services**, St. Paul, MN
- Dr. Robert Block, President, **American Academy of Pediatrics**, Tulsa, OK
- Teresa Huizar, Executive Director, **National Children's Alliance**, Washington, DC