

Stewards of Children 1.0¹ Executive Summary² July 2018

Overview

This Executive Summary highlights key findings of the Stewards of Children (SOC) evaluation conducted by the University of Oregon's Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) in collaboration with The Ford Family Foundation. This is the first rural-focused statewide evaluation of SOC. Data were collected between September 2015 and March 2018.

The study included 1) a pre and post-test evaluation of 8,108 SOC attendees across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California; 2) an 18-month (longitudinal) follow-up with 259 randomly selected attendees; 3) a comparison group drawn from randomly selected rural Oregonians with no exposure to SOC; and 4) conducting 8 focus group interviews. The evaluation focused on these questions:

- Does SOC increase child sexual abuse prevention knowledge and behaviors and, if changes occur, do they persist 18-months after the training?
- How do knowledge, behavioral, and attitude changes among SOC attendees compare to a randomly selected group of rural Oregonians? And, does SOC contribute to an increase in reports to child welfare?
- What impact does SOC have on provider agencies, on communities where it is delivered, and among partner organizations?

Who Participated in the Pre-Post Evaluation?

Pre-post evaluation participants (n=8,108) mostly identified as female (76%), white (82%), with ages ranging from 18 to 97 years, with an average participant age of 44. Participants have received more formal education than the average Oregonian – 63.5% have earned advanced college degrees (2 years or more) and household income exceeded Oregon averages; nearly 54% reported annual income above \$50,000.00. Among all pre-post participants, a full 32% indicated they had themselves experienced child sexual abuse.

The prevalence of child sexual abuse among SOC attendees varied by education levels, i.e., 29% of those with a two-year degree or higher personally experienced child sexual abuse, compared with 37% of those with less than a two-year degree. Rates of child sexual abuse among participants in this evaluation far exceed the estimates (1 in 10) purported in SOC materials.

Most participants identified as middle-aged, white females with above average education levels and income. Nearly 1 in 3 reported having been sexually abused during childhood.

¹ Todahl, J., Barkhurst, P., Schnabler, S., Trevino, S., Cook, K., & Ratliff, M. (2018). *The Executive Summary: A Comprehensive Evaluation of Stewards of Children in Rural Oregon*. The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect, University of Oregon.

² External Evaluators: Jeff Todahl, Phyllis Barkhurst, Simone Schnabler & Shaina Trevino.

What Impact Did SOC Have on Abuse Prevention Knowledge?

Among all participants, correct responses increased by nearly 11% from pre to post (71.6% correct pre, 82.3% correct post). For example, after attending SOC participants were much more likely to know:

- ✓ very young children are at highest risk for child sexual abuse
- ✓ using correct language for body parts is a useful sexual abuse prevention tool
- ✓ specific actions and steps to take to prevent child sexual abuse

What Impact Did SOC Have on Attitudes and Beliefs?

Following SOC, participants were much more likely to agree or strongly agree that child sexual abuse is preventable and that they can personally contribute to its prevention. After attending the training, participants were far more likely to:

- ✓ strongly agree that child sexual abuse can be reduced and believe that they know what to do to contribute to prevention efforts in their community
- ✓ strongly believe that it is their responsibility to protect children
- ✓ strongly agree that their community is working together to reduce child sexual abuse in a planned manner

These changes from pre to post were significant, included large differences, and seem to reflect, for many participants, a sense of optimism and shared action simply from attending the training.

Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs Persisted After 18 Months.

Knowledge. The percentage of correct responses on many of the knowledge items persisted, when examined, at 6, 12 and even 18 months following the SOC training. For nine of fourteen knowledge questions, at 18 months post-training, participants were correct equal to or above their post-test scores. In other words, most participants retained accurate information on most items. Three of the knowledge items that dropped below the post-test score required the retention of numbers and percentages (e.g., percent of assaults carried out by strangers). Questions with very specific numbers or percentages often show decreases in accuracy over time across many types of trainings.

Attitudes and Beliefs. Changes in attitudes and beliefs that participants reported right after the training remained largely true for people even 18 months after the training. People remained hopeful that child sexual abuse can be prevented and accepted personal responsibility, at very high rates, for contributing to prevention efforts themselves. At 18 months, the “strongly agree” response to “*I personally know what to do to prevent sexual abuse in my community*” increased by 10 percent from the original post-test numbers. This suggests that many people felt even more confident about their personal ability to reduce sexual abuse 18-months post-training.

A Surprising Finding: SOC Impact on Beliefs about a Sexual Abuse Prevention Plan. Although the SOC training does not discuss local community-based plans for working together to prevent child sexual abuse; simply attending the training stirred a belief that this is in fact occurring. This may reflect a kind of hopefulness, i.e., *we are doing something about this long-standing problem*: Immediately after the training, and compared with pre-training scores, participants were 3 times more likely to believe their community “has a plan to reduce child sexual abuse.”

How did Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Vary for People Who Attended the Spanish-language SOC Trainings?

Changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors among the participants who attended Spanish-language SOC trainings ($n=232$)³ were similar to the full participant group ($n=8,108$). All attitude changes, for example, trended in the same direction and with similar strength. Focus group interviews with Spanish speaking participants revealed that their sessions were up to 25% longer because they included more time in discussion of the issues raised from the training.

SOC Led to Many Behavioral Changes – and They Persisted Over Time.

Participants reported many behavioral actions – and these actions persisted over time. At 18 months post-training, participants reported engaging in many more of the 16 behaviors and with much more overall frequency than immediately prior to the training. For example, at baseline, 50% of all participants reported that they “looked for signs of sexual abuse in children in my life.” When asked 18 months later, this increased to 84%. This finding suggests that SOC influences sexual abuse prevention action and that these actions persist across time.

Immediately before SOC, 50% of all participants reported that they “looked for signs of sexual abuse in children in my life.” 18 months later, this had increased to 84%.

Nearly all behavioral changes continued to increase. Among all 16 actions, all remained well above the pre-training percentages. Five action types increased over and above the 6-month increase, and 10 actions remained equal to the 6-month post-training increase. A few highlights:

- ✓ At 18-months, nearly 50% of participants had offered support or advice to someone about child sexual abuse (in the previous 6-months). This is 21 points higher than immediately before SOC.
- ✓ 18 months post-training, participants were more than twice as likely to “ask a staff member at a school, church, after-school, or other community-based program about the organization’s child sexual abuse prevention policies” than pre-test participants.

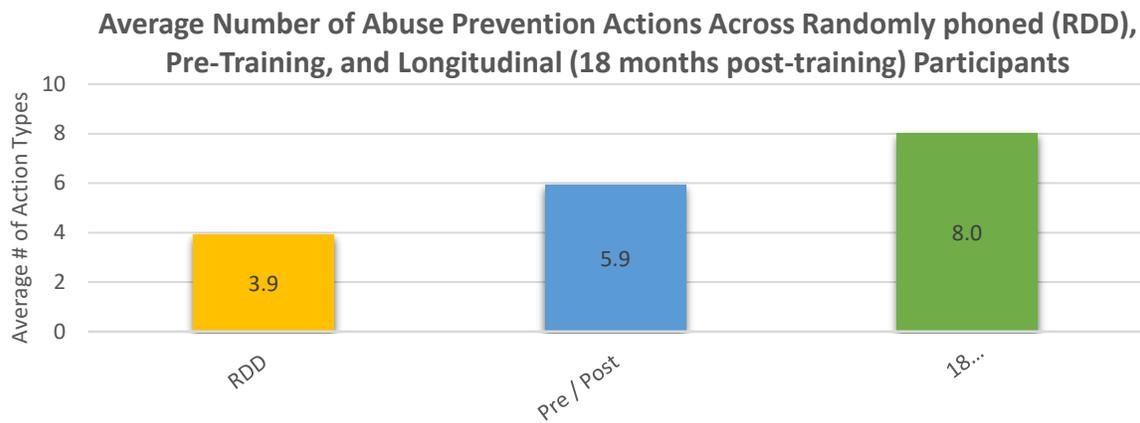
How Did Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Compare with Randomly Selected Oregonians?

231 rural participants participated in the phone interviews (Random Digit Dial, RDD). These participants were demographically dissimilar to SOC training attendees in several ways and, overall, are more closely matched to the general public (e.g., gender, income, education). Nearly across the board, SOC attendees scored higher in all tests (pre, post, longitudinal) than randomly selected Oregonians. This was especially true with behavioral actions. This suggests that SOC trainees engaged in many more child protection behaviors in comparison to rural Oregonians who had no SOC knowledge or exposure. It also points to the fact that most SOC participants to date are those who work in schools or for child-related nonprofits and are presumed to come into the training with a different base level of knowledge, attitudes, and/or beliefs.

Has SOC Increased Reports to Child Protective Services?

SOC has not appeared to impact reports to child protective services. Although report rates across Oregon increased significantly in 2016 relative to 2011-2015, the differences are similar in parts of the State where SOC has, and has not, been delivered. It is important to consider that relative to statewide data collection, SOC has existed for only a small window of time. Additional time may be needed to detect an impact on report rates, if one occurs.

³ The Spanish language training comparisons should be interpreted with caution. The sample size ($n=232$), although the largest data set of its kind, is quite small relative to the full participant group ($n=8,108$). Findings will be more trustworthy as the sample size increases.



18 months after the training, SOC participants were 4 times more likely to ask about sexual abuse prevention policies than randomly called Oregonians.

What Impact Has SOC Had on Provider Programs, Community Partners, and the Public?

Focus group interviews with site leaders investigated the impact of SOC on the community at large, provider organizations, and community partners. Focus group interviews occurred at the annual conference on May 18, 2017. Participants uniformly agreed that SOC has had an impact on their organization, their relationship with partner and new-partner organizations, and that it has contributed to an increased awareness about a) the problem of child sexual abuse in general, b) their organization specifically, and c) the services provided by SOC organizations. Participants were in broad agreement that SOC has helped to expand the identity of the 11 sites, e.g., “It (SOC) has gone from being a new initiative to being a question about who we are as an organization.” And, “it’s expanding understanding of who we are and what we do.” It was also often described as a “catalyst” for change.

Participants also uniformly agreed that SOC has had a productive impact on their relationships with other organizations and has sparked new and deeper collaboration about child sexual abuse prevention between many community groups. Examples of these comments included, “It has started relationships for us;” “It is... like propellant for starting conversations.”

Participants also broadly agreed that SOC has led to changes in the community at large, e.g., “We’ve been able to reach people that had no idea... I do feel like people are thinking about it – including recognizing that it’s the adult’s responsibility, not the child.”

It (SOC) has raised awareness about child abuse as an issue in our community that I’m not sure would have existed otherwise. This issue has been shrouded. I think the training has changed a lot of people’s perceptions.

TO LEARN MORE. SOC trainings continue to be offered throughout Oregon and Siskiyou County, CA. If you would like to learn more about SOC and training opportunities, please contact Mary Ratliff, Protect Our Children Project Coordinator: (541) 430-4326; preventchildabuse@tfff.org. For more information about the SOC evaluation, please contact Simone Schabler, Evaluation Coordinator: (541) 346-7484; simones@uoregon.edu.