



Child sexual abuse is a silent epidemic throughout the world, creating social havoc. It can be prevented and it can be treated with a conscious and sustained effort. Stop the Silence provides that effort.

March 12, 2017

## **Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture Actions to Combat Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), July 2014 – January 2017**

Actions of the Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture concerned four primary levels:

1. National Level
2. Ministry of Education and Culture
3. Schools Level
4. Student Level

### **NATIONAL LEVEL**

**July 2014:** Cypriot Parliament passed legislation to address the need for reducing child sexual abuse (CSA).

**August 2015:** The training conducted by Stop the Silence in December 2014 (see below, Ministry of Education and Culture Level) for Ministry administrators, teachers, psychologists, and NGO staff, helped catalyze the establishment of a national committee, which was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and also involved the Ministries of Health, Social Work, Justice and Education. One purpose was to create a National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat CSA and Child Pornography.

**November 2015:** Decision taken about creating “*Children’s Home*” based on the Icelandic model of assessment and therapy for children sexually abused. The idea was to protect children from victimization and further trauma during the investigation.

**March 2016:** A three-year National Strategy and Action Plan (2016-19) to Combat CSA approved by the Cypriot government, through the Ministerial committee.

**January 2017:** A Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists focused on “CSA basics,” actions to prevent CSA, recognition of signs and symptoms, and actions to address the issue with victims, families, and communities, conducted by Stop the Silence focused on CSA and other ACE prevention, mitigation and reduction. Minister lays out importance of focus on the issue at a national press conference.

### **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE LEVEL**

**December 2014:** Experts from Stop the Silence, USA and a partnering organization (Survivors Healing Center) gave training for 25 officers from various departments and services of the Ministry. Partners from NGOs were also invited to participate to the training. The Main focus of the training was to increase knowledge, create a unit in the Ministry for making decisions and training others, and establish policies.

**December 2014:** Sent circular at schools informing about new legislation passed and informing about their obligations as teachers rising from the law of CSA.

**March 2015:** Establishment of “*Committee of Protection and Prevention of CSA*” in the Ministry by the trained unit. This action facilitated coordination, establishment of policies, work allocation and share of responsibilities. The main focus of the Committee, all of which took place, was to:

1. Plan informative campaigns for students, teachers and parents,
2. Supervise sex education programs in schools,
3. Create a procedure for schools in case a student is suspected or informs sexual abuse, and
4. Create a Teachers Manual on CSA

**October 2015 – February 2016:** Set procedures of handling CSA cases in schools. The procedures were discussed and approved by the representatives of the National Committee to Combat CSA as well as representatives from Police Headquarters.

**February 2016:** The Committee set out a second detailed circular for schools that analyzed procedures and gave emphasis to child protection in case of abuse. They developed step-by-step school procedures.

**March 2016:** A text with Ministry's policy on Children Sex Education was established by a unit of the Pedagogical Institute and then circulated to schools. It served to coordinate all of the Ministry's actions as well as the Pedagogical Institute's training actions on sex education.

**March 2016:** The unit informed all directors and inspectors inside the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the District Offices about on-going actions, policies, law and procedures.

**February – June 2016:** Some of Ministerial staff that had formerly been trained provided an informative seminar about CSA law and procedures to School Headmasters.

**September 2016:** The unit oversaw the development of a parents' circular and it was given out by the schools to inform parents about CSA law, procedures and sex education in schools.

**October 2016:** The unit developed a Teachers' Manual that was distributed to all schools.

**January 2017:** Stop the Silence conducted a Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists. The Minister laid out the importance of focus on the issue in a national press conference. Discussions begin on further training needed (e.g., doctors, police, judges) and informational campaigns.

### **SCHOOL LEVEL**

**December 2014:** Schools acknowledged the new legislation passed and promoted information about their obligations arising from the law of CSA.

**February 2016:** Schools studied and applied the detailed procedures provided in the Circular, giving emphasis to child protection in the case of abuse.

**February – June 2016:** School Headmasters participated to informative seminars about CSA law and procedures.

**March – June 2016:** Members of the unit and NGOs conduct a school-based training on CSA law and procedures.

**September 2016:** Schools sent out a parents' circular about CSA law, procedures and sex education policy in schools developed by the unit of the Ministry.

**September 2017-2020:** All teachers will be invited to participate in a daily seminar about CSA law and school procedures.

**Early 201:** The Teachers Manual about CSA will be distributed to all schools; there will be a new training serving school counselors and psychologists.

**December 2014 – Today:** Schools can communicate at any time with the Ministry committee members and other leadership to ensure proper counseling and guidelines for handling and reporting cases of CSA.

**January 2017:** Stop the Silence conducted a Ministry-mandated training for all school counselors and psychologists. Minister lays out importance of focus on the issue in a national press conference.

### **STUDENT LEVEL**

#### **Academic years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17**

Application of:

- Prevention programs for all ages, mostly done by NGOs
- Sex education at school (6-15 years old)
- Information about Students' Helplines
- Students' leaflets are planning to be created for different ages