

Kid & Teen Safe: An Abuse Prevention Programme for Youth with Disabilities USA



Type of intervention



Classroom setting

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Primary prevention

(Potential)
Offenders

Children (6-11 Years), Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years) | Male & Female | Interventions for those with disabilities/learning difficulties | Classroom Setting | English

Primary prevention

Children and Young
People (Victims)

Children (6-11 Years), Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years) | Male & Female | Interventions for those with disabilities/learning difficulties | Classroom Setting | English

Secondary prevention

Children and Young
People (Victims)

Children (6-11 Years), Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years) | Male & Female | Interventions for those with disabilities/learning difficulties | Classroom Setting | English

Target population

Children and young people aged 10-18 years with disabilities. Participants include youth with physical, developmental, cognitive, specific learning, sensory, psychiatric/behavioural and/or multiple disabilities.

Delivery organisation

Kid & Teen SAFE was developed by SafePlace: Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survival Center in Austin, Texas and published by the National Resource Centre on Domestic Violence in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The topics described

in the Kid & Teen SAFE Program Manual can be delivered by a facilitator with experience in both areas: working with children and youth with disabilities and working in the violence prevention field.

Mode and context of delivery

The Kid & Teen SAFE programme offers educational sessions which can be delivered in a range of environments to groups of children and young people. The mode is fully described in the Kid & Teen SAFE Program Manual. The context includes schools, summer programs, disability service agencies, residential facilities, independent living centres, victim service agencies and/or other educational or recovery programs for groups of youth or adults with a broad range of disabilities.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Suggested facilitator expertise and qualities include mature, flexible and engaging individuals who are comfortable facilitating and participating in role plays, addressing issues related to health sexuality and responding to disclosures of abuse. Staff need experience in providing disability-related access needs and reasonable accommodations and the capability to adjust the level and complexity of information to groups of youth with a range of disabilities. Facilitators may have backgrounds in counselling, social work, psychology, psychiatry, education, rehabilitation and/or domestic and sexual violence prevention ideal. In addition school teachers, parents, counsellors, adult peers with disabilities and others can learn about these topics and, with preparation, deliver the program activities.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Up to four educational sessions, with one session per day, for four days and each lesson lasting 30-60 minutes depending on the attention span of the particular student group.

Description of intervention

The Kid & Teen SAFE project provides school based abuse prevention education to assist in empowering children, youth and young adults with disabilities to understand and advocate for their rights to personal safety and to learn skills that can help reduce the risks of violence. The educator/facilitator will customise presentations to meet the learning needs of each group. For example, visual materials will be described for those who are blind, and information will be presented in concrete terminology for persons with cognitive and/or neurodevelopmental disabilities. Class sessions are held primarily in special education classrooms and in residential schools for students who are blind or deaf. However, they are also offered at the local children's shelter, the state hospital, summer camps and congregate homes for children and youth with disabilities, as well as non-profit agencies that serve children with disabilities and their families.

The primary learning objectives include:

- building or strengthening awareness of emotions and personal boundaries
- identifying various types of touches and with whom they are appropriate
- asserting individual rights to say “no” or “stop” to unwanted touches
- escaping abusive or potentially abusive people and situations
- identifying trusted adults and how to tell trusted adults if abuse occurs
- supporting youth, family or service providers in identifying and discussing other topics relevant to personal safety and abuse prevention.

Class participants include children with physical, intellectual, developmental, cognitive, learning, sensory, mental health/psychiatric, behavioural and/or other disabilities. The program has served children with neurodevelopmental disabilities (for example attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, communication, neurocognitive disabilities, intellectual and specific learning disabilities), physical disabilities, sensory disabilities (for example deaf, blind and/or visually impaired) and mental health/behavioural disabilities.

When classroom time is focused on reducing the risks of abuse occurring in a group setting, the teachers and facilitators are demonstrating that abuse or assault is not a shameful secret or a socially taboo subject, but instead, a topic that can and should be discussed frankly and honestly.

A typical abuse prevention series will frequently model the following schedule:

Day 1:

- define personal safety
- identify and discuss feelings
- identify and discuss types of touches and words
 - “okay” touches/ “okay” words
 - “not okay” touches/ “not okay” words
 - confusing touches (optional)
- overview of safety rule basics

Day 2:

- review previous lesson
- identify body parts, including private parts
- discuss secrets: fun secrets and hurtful, “special” secrets
- address bullying and sexual harassment in a safe manner

Day 3

- role-plays using safety rules in common scenarios

Day 4 (for young people aged 14-18 years)

- healthy sexuality education or other suggested topics (for example puberty, dating and violence at home)
- additional topics may be added, based on student interests, age and needs

Daily sessions are typically conducted in 30-60 minutes, depending upon the attention span of the particular student group. The teacher/facilitators will utilise an interactive format that focuses on non-violent ways to respond to abuse, bullying or harassment.

Teaching strategies for children and youth with disabilities include discussions, drawings, the use of anatomically correct dolls/models and scenario and role-playing activities. The educator encourages participation, but also respects and follows the student’s lead and choices about whether or not to actively participate. The educator primarily supplements the lesson with the following curricula and teaching aids, based on the students’ chronological age:

- No-Go-TELL!
- Safe and Okay
- Teach a Body Doll
- LifeFacts: Sexual Abuse Prevention
- LifeFacts: Sexuality
- LifeFacts: Managing Emotions
- Changes in You

Evaluation

The Kid & Teen SAFE Program Manual includes a pre- and post-test type evaluation. To view this form, please visit http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/NRC_KTSafe-full.pdf.

Child Evaluations:

During calendar year 1999-2000, 849 children participated in abuse prevention education sessions and information was collected on 94% of the children. Not all participants were included because some were absent on the last session, some were non-responsive throughout the sessions or to particular questions by choice and some students had disabilities that were too severe. Prior to the training, the educator asks each student what s/he would do if someone tries to hurt them. A correct response is coded if the student indicates (without prompting) that s/he would tell the person No!, leave the situation, tell an adult or a similar reply. The same question is asked after the abuse prevention information is taught. Responses indicated that 21% of students showed increased knowledge of personal safety strategies after the training when asked what they would do if someone tried to hurt them.

At the end of the sessions, the following were able to respond correctly without prompting:

- 68% could identify “okay/alright” touches
- 77% could identify “not-okay/not-alright” touches
- 88% could identify their own gender (male/female)
- 64% could identify anatomically correct private areas
- 73% could recall/demonstrate the No-Go-TELL! prevention strategy sequence
- 86% could identify one known, trusted adult

Teen Evaluations (14-18 years):

Also during the same time period, 93 teens took part in abuse prevention education sessions. A separate evaluation tool was administered to those able to complete a written survey (primarily students who do not have a “cognitive disability” label). Students were asked to complete the survey that was distributed at the end of the final class to gauge whether participants had learned new information about abusive behaviours and respectful relationships as a result of the training. A majority (74%) of students indicated that they learned new information about abuse and 73% reported that they gained knowledge about respectful relationships as a result of participating in the training.

References

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