

# Starting with the End in Mind: Critical Knowledge, Skills & Resources for the Safety and Success of Children with Disabilities

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# Word of Recognition & Thanks



# Webinar Goals

1. Provide “**talking points**” that you can use to initiate, inform, support and direct conversations concerning the safety and success of children with disabilities. Three levels of conversations:

- ▶ **Level 1:** Awareness & Understanding;
- ▶ **Level 2:** Recognition & Reporting; and
- ▶ **Level 3:** Prevention & Response.

2. Provide and seek information, strategies and resources re. day-to-day instructional activities that can be used to enhance the safety and success of **all** children with a particular focus upon children with disabilities.

3. Foster the development and use of a collaborative network to design, implement and evaluate strategies, resources and program designs to enhance the safety and success of **all** children with a particular focus upon children with disabilities.

▶ “It is easier build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Frederick Douglass





# Opening Questions...

1. What roles do you now serve, e.g., teacher, counselor, administrator, parent, survivor, teacher preparation, research, etc.?
2. What information, strategies and/or resources do you hope to gain from this Webinar?

Please use the “chat” option to respond to these questions.



# Starting point...

- ▶ Since I began my work on this topic in 2006 I have learned...
  - ▶ ...to focus upon the safety and success we want for our children, vs. wait for the harm and trauma of maltreatment.
  - ▶ ...that individuals must be willing to talk about our children's safety before they can act to enhance that safety.
  - ▶ ...that the safety and well being of our children is inherently grounded in the safety and well being of their parents.
  - ▶ ...while we must trust our instincts when we think a parent, or a child, is experiencing trauma, we are frequently not ready to act on those instincts.

- ▶ I have learned that...
  - ▶ ...educational professionals are often hesitant to incorporate child safety into IFSP and IEP plans.
  - ▶ ...parents and professionals need “just in time” vs. “just in case” information concerning the safety of their children and students.
  - ▶ ... we need collaborative partners to successfully and systematically enhance the safety of our children
- ▶ **Question:** Can you add any points that you have learned as a result of your work on this topic?

Please use the “chat” option to respond to these questions.



# Talking Points: Level 1 “Awareness & Understanding”

## ▶ Definitions:

### ▶ Maltreatment:

- "An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

### ▶ Perpetrators:

- ▶ ...individuals who harm children are either actively (abuse), or passively (neglect) using a child to satisfy their own needs and desires in such a way to cause significant harm to the child (Lightfoot, 2019).

Web Resource: [Definitions of Child Abuse & Neglect](#)





## ▶ Timing:

- ▶ ...children are **at greatest risk for neglect and physical maltreatment during their first five years** of life when they are the most isolated and dependent on others for the health and wellbeing (Wildeman, Emanuel, Leventhal, Putnam-Horstein, & Waldfogel, 2014).
- ▶ ...**As children grow older**, their risk for neglect decreases and their **risk physical, sexual and emotional maltreatment increases** (Putnam-Hornstein & Needell, 2011).
- ▶ ...**Maltreatment is most likely to occur when the abuser can isolate, gain control over and be alone with a child** (Winters & Jeglic, 2017).
- ▶ Web Resource: [Child Maltreatment 2019: Summary of Key Findings \(full report\)](#)

- ▶ **Impact:**...children who experience abuse are at increased risk for:
  - ▶ Health:
    - ▶ increased probability of experiencing obesity, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease (Dye, 2018).
  - ▶ Behavior:
    - ▶ self-injurious behaviors, eating disorders, aggression, substance abuse (Dye, 2018).
  - ▶ Emotional:
    - ▶ depression, learned helplessness, attachment disorders, inability to trust others, difficulty in regulating stress, suicidal behavior (Dye, 2018).
  - ▶ Education:
    - ▶ decreases school attendance, poor academic performance, and increases school drop outs (Fry, D., Xiangming, F., Stuart, E., Casey, T., Xiaodong, Z., Jiaoyuan, L., Lani, F., & Gilleen, M., 2018).



## ▶ Perpetrators:

- ▶ Most individuals who neglect children are female vs. most individuals who abuse children are males.
- ▶ Individuals who have the most contact with, control over and isolated time with a child have the greatest opportunity to abuse the child.
- ▶ In the majority of cases, such individuals are the child's caregivers, followed by those who are known and trusted by the parents.
- ▶ Most perpetrators are in the early to late 20s.
- ▶ Perpetrators “groom” their victims to keep bigger and more sinister “secrets” that increasingly make the victim feel complicit in the abuse, i.e., somehow it is their fault, that they did something wrong.

(Hurren, Thompson, Jenkins, Chrzanowski, Allard & Stewart, 2018).

Web Resource: [Child Maltreatment 2019: Summary of Key Findings \(full report\)](#)



## ► Incidence:

- ...children with disabilities are 3-4 times more likely to maltreated (neglected & abused) than their nondisabled peers (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000).
- ...It is estimated that 25+% of children with disabilities will experience one or more forms of maltreatment between birth and 18 years of age (Jones et al, 2012).
- Particular types of disabilities, e.g., those with behavior and/or communication disabilities, experience higher rates of maltreatment (Christoffersen, 2019).

- Web Resource: [The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities](#)

- ▶ **Causes:** Students with disabilities are at greater risk for maltreatment due to their:
  - ▶ ...social isolation, stigma and discrimination (Lightfoot, 2019; Lomas & Johnson, 2012).
  - ▶ **Risk Factors:** Students with disabilities often...
    - ▶ 1. ...are lonely and susceptible to almost any attention, even if that attention is confusing, upsetting and painful;
    - ▶ 2. ...lack age appropriate friends, therefore they do not know what are appropriate vs inappropriate behaviors;
    - ▶ 3. ...are not recognized to experience a significantly higher risk of maltreatment;
    - ▶ 4. ...can be lured into risky face-to-face and online situations because they are socially naïve; and
    - ▶ 5. ...are expected to act differently due to their disabilities, therefore behavioral indicators of maltreatment are often missed, or misinterpreted.



- ▶ Causes: (cont.)
  - ▶ ... limited language skills that reduce their understanding and ability to report maltreatment (Miller, Verson, & Capella, 2005).
    - ▶ **Risk Factors:** Students with disabilities often lack sufficient language skills to effectively...
      - ▶ 6. ...share the who, what, when, and where of their day-to-day experiences, therefore are not understood or believed when they share a maltreatment experience;
      - ▶ 7. ...name their body parts;
      - ▶ 8. ...identify the emotions they are experiencing, e.g., scared, confused, fearful, etc.; and
      - ▶ 9. ...gain an adult's attention and persist in telling someone that they confused, uncomfortable, even scared about what they are experiencing with another individual.

- ▶ Causes: (cont.)
  - ▶ ...conditioned to be compliant to adult commands and being touched by adults without consent or understanding (Hibbard & Desch, 2007; MacDougall, 2000).
    - ▶ **Risk Factors:** Students with disabilities often...
      - ▶ 10. ...do not understand what is appropriate and inappropriate demands from adults and older peers;
      - ▶ 11. ...are used to doing what adults tell them to do with little understanding of what or why they are being to do it; and
      - ▶ 12. ...do not know they have the right to say “NO!” and what to do if that right is not respected.

- ▶ Causes: (cont.)
  - ▶ ...limited understanding of their emerging sexuality and what constitutes maltreatment (Miller, Verson, & Capella, 2005).
    - ▶ **Risk Factors:** Students with disabilities often do not understand ...
      - ▶ 13. ...why and how their bodies and emotions are changing during puberty making them easier to manipulate, confuse and maltreat;
      - ▶ 14. ...how to appropriately and safely respond to their emerging sexual emotions; and
      - ▶ 15. ...what are appropriate dating behaviors.

Web Resource: [Child Factors That Contribute to Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

- ▶ Those are the “risk factors” that I have found through my research and experience.
- ▶ **Question:** What additional/different risk factors have you discovered?

Please use the “chat” option to respond to this question.



# Level 1: Summary

- ▶ Perpetrators use children to satisfy their own needs and desires in such a way to cause significant harm to the child.
- ▶ The type of maltreatment experienced by children changes over time.
- ▶ Children who are most dependent upon adults for the care and who are most isolated (physically and socially) from the community are at the greatest risk for maltreatment.
- ▶ Maltreated children are “groomed” by their assailants to keep “secrets.”



# Level 1: Summary (cont.)...

- ▶ Adults, and older children, who have the greatest control over and alone time with a child have the greatest opportunity to maltreat the children.
- ▶ The trauma of maltreatment has significant, life long, negative impact upon the individual's health, behavior, emotional state and educational achievement. This impact is in addition to challenges caused by the child's disability
- ▶ Children with disabilities "risk factors" make them ideal victims of maltreatment.

# Talking Points: Level 2 “Recognition & Reporting”

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## ► **Recognition:**

- ...children who are experiencing maltreatment often:
  1. show sudden changes in behavior;
  2. has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents attention;
  3. excessively vigilant/watchful;
  4. are overly compliant, withdrawn, or aggressive;
  5. comes to school or other activities early, stays late and does not want to go home;
  6. are reluctant to be around a particular individual, or go to a particular setting.

Web Resource: [What is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms](#)

- ▶ ...adults who are maltreating children often:
  1. blame the child for problems;
  2. show little concern or empathy;
  3. encourage harsh discipline for the child;
  4. demand unreasonable levels of performance;
  5. are excessively controlling; and
  6. rely upon the child to meet their (i.e., the adults) needs.
- ▶ ...adults and their children who they are maltreating often:
  1. touch or look at one another;
  2. describe their relationship as entirely negative; and
  3. state they do not like one another.

Web Resource: [What is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms](#)

## ▶ Reporting: ...

- ▶ ...there is significant hesitancy to report a child suspected of experiencing maltreatment because of...
  - ▶ ...a fear of being wrong;
  - ▶ ...an uncertainty re. how to make a report;
  - ▶ ...a lack of knowledge of what happens after a report has been made;
  - ▶ ...the belief that reporting may make things worse for the child;
  - ▶ ...the child has asked them not to tell anyone;



## ▶ Reporting (cont.)

- ▶ ...a fear of disapproval from parents, of parental denial, of lack of administrative support and possible legal ramifications for false allegations;
- ▶ ...a lack of training, and ongoing support, concerning how to recognize, report and respond to possible incidences of child abuse; and
- ▶ ...a belief that someone else is dealing with this problem.

(Alvarex, Kenny, Donohue & Carpin, 2004; Bonner, & Hensley, 1997; Kenny, 2001; 2004);





- ▶ When you talk to the child suspected of experiencing maltreatment:
  - ▶ “Actively listen to the child (stop what you are doing, look at her/him, respond by nodding and making supportive sounds).
  - ▶ Control your expression of panic, shock or horror.
  - ▶ Express your belief that the child is telling the truth.
  - ▶ Use the child’s language and vocabulary.
  - ▶ Tell the child that this has happened to other children and that they are not alone.
  - ▶ Reassure the child that to disclose was the right thing to do, emphasizing that, whatever happened, it was not their fault and they are not bad.



- ▶ When you talk to the child suspected of experiencing maltreatment: (cont.)
  - ▶ Tell the child that you will do your best to support and protect them.
  - ▶ Indicate that you will have to make a report of the incident to the head teacher/warden and that they will help to stop the abuse.
- ▶ Do not...
  - ▶ ...make any judgmental statement about the alleged perpetrator. The child may well love this person and only want the abuse to stop.
  - ▶ ...seek details beyond those the child freely wants to tell you. Your role is to listen to the child, not to conduct an investigation.
    - ▶ (Cossar, J., Belderson, P., Brandon, M. , 2019).



- ▶ Informational Web Resources:
  - ▶ [State Statues Regarding Child Maltreatment](#) +
  - ▶ [State Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Numbers](#)
- ▶ Decision Strategies:
  - ▶ Share your suspicions with the school principle and/or counselor
  - ▶ Call 1-800-4-A-CHILD) 24/7 for a free, confidential call with a [ChildHelp](#) counselor re. your maltreatment suspicions
    - ▶ The counselor will help you decide if a report is warranted and if so, who to contact
- ▶ We must risk being wrong for the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Childhelp

English

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Reporting child abuse can be scary, but if you are a witness to or a victim of child abuse there is a huge benefit to making the report yourself. Being able to tell your story first hand gives the child care worker much better information than if it came from someone not involved.

Your story could save a life.

Our counselors are available to talk through child abuse situations if you have questions or need emotional support. We can also help research additional resources that may be available to you.

Live Chat





# Level 2: Summary (cont.)

- ▶ Particular attention should be given to recognizing the behavioral indicators of maltreatment as demonstrated by children with disabilities.
- ▶ Local resources (e.g., school principal and counselor), online counselors (e.g., ChildHelp Hotline) and online resources (e.g., state reporting contact numbers & reporting protocols) can serve to reduce reporting barriers.
- ▶ **Bottom line**...you must trust your “gut” and report your suspicions for the immediate and long term safety and success of a child.





# Talking Points: Level 3 “Prevention & Response”

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- ▶ On October of 2018 the Council for Exceptional Children established the [policy on the Prevention and Response to Maltreatment](#).
- ▶ The policy has three primary elements, i.e.,
  1. ...building awareness and understanding of maltreatment of children and youth with disabilities;
  2. ...advocating mechanisms for recognizing and reporting maltreatment; and
  3. ...incorporating prevention and response strategies into everyday practices.
- ▶ This policy resulted from a multiyear effort by members of the CEC Interdivisional Caucus (IDC).

- ▶ The impact of the policy is that educators of students with disabilities are now expected to prevent and respond, as well as recognize and report maltreatment.
- ▶ Research by the IDC group found that...
  - ▶ ...while a slight majority of surveyed CEC members felt confident in their knowledge of the incidence, observation and reporting of maltreatment,
  - ▶ ...80% indicated the need for more information in how to prevent and respond to their students who had experienced maltreatment (Cihak, Bogdan, DeBettercourt, Hopkins, Johnson, Lively, & VanderPloeg, 2015).
- ▶ **Question:** Does your own experience support these findings?  
  
Please use the “chat” option to respond to these questions.
- ▶ This final section of the Webinar has been designed to address this need for additional information concerning prevention strategies.



# Risk Factors to Prevention Strategies

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- ▶ I have identified 15 factors that increase students with disabilities risk for maltreatment.
- ▶ I propose all but one of those factors can be addressed through day-to-day classroom activities of **all** students, with a particular focus upon students with disabilities.
- ▶ The exception is risk factor number is number, i.e., “3. ...are not recognized to experience a significantly higher risk of maltreatment.”
  - ▶ This factor simply requires a “Level 1” conversation that shares information presented within this Webinar.
  - ▶ It all starts with a conversation....one that **you** will very likely have to initiate!

# How can the risk factors be addressed during day-to-day Instruction?

- ▶ How can educators help **all** students, with a particular focus upon students with disabilities, gain the knowledge and skills they need to be safe and successful?
- ▶ What are the educational strategies and resources that can be used to assist teachers in this work?
- ▶ Here are a few examples I have pulled together of instructional possibilities.

# Instructional Example

- ▶ Risk Factor:
  - ▶ 8. ...identify the emotions they are experiencing, e.g., scared, confused, fearful, etc.
- ▶ Inst. Goal:
  - ▶ Student can accurately name (e.g., tell, write, role play, or draw) the emotions they demonstrate each day for a week.
- ▶ Inst. Resources:
  - ▶ **You/Tube Explanation:** [Check-In / Check-Out Providing a Daily Support System](#)
  - ▶ **Teaching Ideas:** [Emotional Check-Ins; Understanding Feelings](#)
  - ▶ **Supporting Children's Literature:** [Alex and the Scary Things: A Story to Help Children Who Have Experienced Something Scary; How Are You Feeling Today Baby Bear?: Exploring Big Feelings After Living in a Stormy Home; Today I Feel Silly: And Other Moods That Make My Day](#)



# Instructional Example

- ▶ Risk Factor:
  - ▶ #7. ...name their body parts
  - ▶ #12. ....does not know they have the right to say “NO!” and what to do if that right is not respected
- ▶ Inst. Goal: Student can accurately identify (e.g., tell, write, role play, or draw)..
  - ▶ ...the correct name for major body parts.
  - ▶ ...when they have the right to say “NO” and what to do if that right is not respected.
- ▶ Inst. Resources:
  - ▶ **YouTube Explanations:** [Consent for Kids](#); [Kids Talk About Their Bodies](#); [My Body Belongs to Me](#); [Consent And Communication](#)
  - ▶ **Teaching Ideas:** [Teaching Consent](#)
  - ▶ **Supporting Children’s Literature:** [Saying No \(YTV\)](#); [Be Safe w/ Touch, Teasing & Play](#); [Milo’s Boundaries \(YTV\)](#); [I Said NO! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private](#); [I Don’t Want to Go to Justin’s House Anymore](#)

“YTV” = YouTube video: book read aloud

# Instructional Example:

- ▶ Risk Factor:
  - ▶ 6. ...share the who, what, when, and where of their day-to-day experiences, therefore are not understood or believed when they share a maltreatment experience
- ▶ Instructional Goal: Student can accurately identify (e.g., tell, write, role play, or draw) the who, what, when, and where within a true and a fictional story + explain the difference.
- ▶ Instructional Resources:
  - ▶ **YouTube Explanation:** [The Power of Storytelling in Teaching](#)
  - ▶ **Teaching Ideas:** [How Telling Stories Helps Children Learn: 30 Storytelling Tips For Teachers To Capture Students' Attention](#)
  - ▶ **Children's Literature:** [Saying No \(YTV\)](#); [Be Safe w/ Touch, Teasing & Play; Milo's Boundaries \(YTV\)](#); [Alex and the Scary Things: A Story to Help Children Who Have Experienced Something Scary](#); [How Are You Feeling Today Baby Bear?](#)

# Instructional Example:

- ▶ Risk Factor:
  - ▶ #15. ...what are appropriate dating behaviors
- ▶ Inst. Goal: Student can accurately identify (e.g., tell, write, role play, or draw) three appropriate and three inappropriate dating behaviors.
- ▶ Inst. Resources:
  - ▶ **YouTube Explanation:** [The 8 Stages of Dating](#); [Teen Dating Violence](#)
  - ▶ **Teaching Ideas:** [Teen Dating Violence: Literature Review: A product of the Model Programs Guide](#); [Understanding Healthy Relationship](#)
  - ▶ **Supporting Children's Literature:** [Drama: A Graphic Novel](#); [Dating Smarts: What Every Teen Needs To Know To Date, Relate Or Wait](#)

# Questions...

- ▶ Do you have, or know of someone, who has instructional experiencing addressing one, or more of the identified risk factors?
- ▶ Would you be interested in collaborating to identify, share and use instructional strategies and resources to address the identified (or other) risk factors for the purpose of enhancing the safety and success of **all** children, with a particular focus upon children with disabilities?

Please use the “chat” option to respond to these questions.



# Level 3: Summary

- ▶ CEC policy now calls for special education professionals to **expand** their responsibilities from the recognition and reporting of children suspected of experiencing maltreatment, to maltreatment prevention and response.
- ▶ Existent research indicates that most professionals are not prepared carry out this expanded responsibility.
- ▶ Students' with disability have been identified to exhibit specific risk factors that increase their likelihood of being maltreated.
- ▶ It was proposed that the risk factors can be addressed through day-to-day instructional activities that would enhance the safety and success of **all** children.



# Level 3: Summary (cont.)

- ▶ Web and text based resources were shared to demonstrate how day-to-day instructional activities can be used to address specific risk factors.
- ▶ A call for collaboration was made to inform and expand the use of instructional strategies and resources to enhance the safety and success of **all** children, with a particular focus upon children with disabilities.

# Q & A

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- ▶ What are your questions, suggestions and reactions concerning the maltreatment of all children, with a particular focus upon children with disabilities?

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Please use the “chat” option to respond to these questions.



# A few key resources...

- ▶ **Level 1: Awareness & Understanding**
  - ▶ CDC: [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)
  - ▶ [Child Welfare Information Gateway: The Risk and Prevention of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities.](#)
- ▶ **Level 2: Recognition & Reporting**
  - ▶ [ChildHelp Hotline](#): 24/7 online, confidential chat, call, or text calls with counselors to decide if and how to report, or seek help in relation child maltreatment
  - ▶ [State Maltreatment Reporting Contact Information](#)
- ▶ **Level 3: Prevention & Response**
  - ▶ [Hands & Voices: O.U.R. Children Project](#): Monthly topical phone conversations, [Parent Toolkit](#), resources, articles and recorded Webinars.
  - ▶ [Kidpower International](#): Curricular materials and workshops concerning child abuse, bullying, assault, intimate partner violence prevention; services for parents; online safety and digital citizenship.

- ▶ "Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero."

Fred Rogers

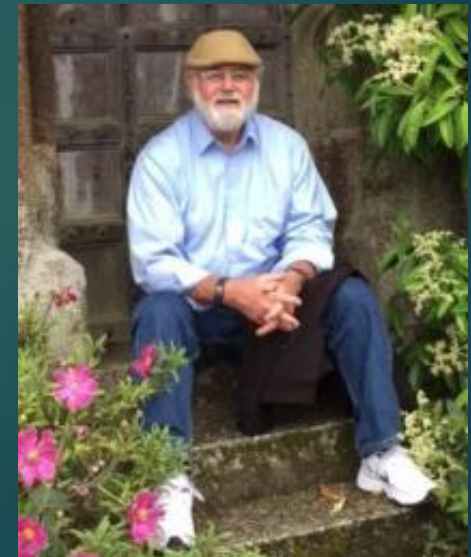


# Contact Information

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- ▶ Please contact me if you would like to join a community of learners who are working to enhance the safety and success of all children, with a particular focus upon children with disabilities.





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