



# "Family Centered Prevention & Response Knowledge, Resources and Strategies

My 1, 2025

## CEC Bright Spot Project ZOOM Session

- I. Share key information and ideas for the purpose of enhancing Bright Spot work by sharing key information and encouraging collaborative efforts.

### A. Bright Spot Presenters

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"From Family Awareness, To Understanding, To Action: Approaches for the Prevention of Maltreatment."

#### a. My initial thought for this presentation...

- (1) Focus on the "[Protective Factors Framework](#)" to build strong and stable families

[Children's Alliance: Protective Factors](#)

The Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework includes the following five protective factors:

1. Parental Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Parenting
4. Child Development
5. Concrete Support in Times of Need
6. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

**Note:** other lists of these factors include parents's understanding and effectively responding to the learning differences and needs of their children with disabilities.

**(a) ...but then, many of you are already aware of these factors + the factors are already routinely incorporated into the work of Early Intervention Specialists**

**b. Then I reflected on how I have worked with parents in the past, i.e., ...**

**(1) I thought that if parents just understood...**

**(a) ...the incidence and impact of maltreatment experienced by children with disabilities**

**i) ...the behavioral indicators that a child frequently exhibits during/following a maltreatment experience**

**(1) ...the availability of "HelpLines" (e.g., 1-800-4-A-CHILD) to call/text if a parent was concerned that their child might have been maltreated + knew the state specific phone numbers and reporting procedures**

**(a) ...the specific knowledge and skills needed to enhance child interpersonal safety + how to advocate for their inclusion in children's with disabilities I,E.P.**

**i) ...that all would be well, i.e., parents would be "empowered" with the knowledge, resources and strategies to prevent, or at least effectively respond the maltreatment of their child with disabilities.**

**(1) Unfortunately, I was DEAD wrong! Many, many parents...**

**(a) ...could not imagine their child being maltreated. Plus, they were so overwhelmed and alarmed by the information that it was very difficult for them to act.**

**I needed to use a different approach!**

**c. I just recently began using an alternative strategy, one that I describe as "their topic, your task." Let me explain...**

## **(1) Strategy**

### **(a) A. Establish Existing Family Rules**

- i) Ask parents to identify the rules they currently have in their family to insure the safety of their children's safety**

#### **(1) Examples of common "Family Rules"**

[drawn from the "[O.U.R. Children Project](#)"]

##### **(a) riding in cars**

###### **Family Rule:**

...children are always required wear their seat belt when riding in a car.

##### **(b) whereabouts**

###### **Family Rule:**

...children must tell their parents where they are going and who they will be with + changes that occur in the plan.

##### **(c) being around pools and lakes**

###### **Family Rule:**

..children must be supervised around water and learn how to swim as soon as possible.

##### **(d) aggressive dogs**

###### **Family Rule:**

...children are taught to move away from dogs that are barking and lunging at them

##### **(e) food**

###### **Family Rule:**

...children are not allowed to eat food that may be bad for them, e.g., allergies, spoiled, etc.

##### **(f) guns**

###### **Family Rule:**

\_\_\_children are never permitted to be in a setting where guns

are not properly secured.

**(g) knives**

**Family Rule:**

...children are not be allowed to handle sharp objects, e.g., knives, box cutters, etc.

**(h) "Stranger Danger"**

**Family Rule:**

...children are never allowed get in the car or leave a setting with someone they do not know.

**(i) call if uneasy**

**Family Rule:**

...children are to contact a parent if they ever feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or afraid in a situation. The family has a "code word" that the child can use if they do not want others to know that they are calling their parents for help.

**(j) public bathrooms**

**Family Rule:**

...children should not go to a public bathroom alone, ask a friend to go with you.

**(k) ...additional rules you had in your family or you know to be used in other families?**

**Note:** if you are looking for a good, parent friendly documents to share with parents concerning children's interpersonal safety, here are two I would suggest considering.

[Hands & Voices: O.U.R. Children Project - Parent Toolkit](#)

U.S. Dept. of Education: [Personal Safety for Children](#)

**(b) B. Establish Existing Patterns of Adult/child Interactions**

**i) Ask parents to identify the adults, and older children, who consistently interact with their children.**

Examples of such individuals are relatives, neighbors, teachers, coaches, scout masters, church youth ministers, etc.

**It is particularly important to identify those individuals who are permitted to be "one-on-one" with the child, i.e., in situations where the individual is alone with the child.**

Parents should know the names and contact information for each individual who is trusted to be alone with their child.

**(1) Ask the parents if these individuals know and agree to follow the "Family Rules?"**

If the individuals do not agree to follow the "Family Rules," then they should NOT be permitted to interact with the child.

Individuals who do agree should be added to the family's "Circle of Trust."

**(a) Share the concept of "Circle of Trust"**

[kidpower International](#)

[kidpower International](#)

The "**Circle of Trust**" is composed of adults and older children who parents trust to frequently interact with their child.

These individuals are trusted to keep children safe, to know and follow "**Family Rules**," and to contact the parents if something happens to raise their concern for the child's safety.

**i) Key Requirements to be in a child's "Circle of Trust"**

Individuals in the child's **"Circle of Trust:"**

1. Know and agree to follow "Family Rules."
2. Allow the child to contact the parent at any time that they request.
3. Do not give the child "special favors" or attention.
4. Do not deviate from the agreed upon/expected activities or locations.
5. Do not physically touch the child except for their immediate safety or well-being, e.g., to prevent an injury, or provide first aide.
6. Acknowledge that the parents have the right to stop by at any time to see their child.

**Note:** it would be helpful if parents gave individuals in the child's **"Circle of Trust"** a copy of the **"Family Rules."**

**(1) Share why establishing "Circles of Trust" are particularly important for children with disabilities.**

Children with disabilities may engage in activities that their parents would not approve of because they...

...**may not know they can say "NO" to an adult**, as a result, they may comply without really understanding what they are doing, even if the activity makes them feel uncomfortable.

...**may be overly trusting and socially nave**, as a result, they may be encouraged to engage in socially inappropriate activities.

...**may not have age-appropriate friends and as a result are lonely** and are more likely to accept any attention. even if the attention results in making them uncomfortable.

...**may have limited communication skills** that make it difficult for them to share their emotions or explain the who, what, where, and when of their day-to-day activities. As a result, they would experience significant difficulty in sharing an interpersonal experience that made them feel uncomfortable.

...**may not understand the changing emotions that occur during puberty** or how to act on those emotions in a socially appropriate manner.

- (a) Suggest two additional "**Family Rules**" that may be particularly helpful in insuring their child's interpersonal safety

- i) **Daily "Check Ins"**

- Family Rule:**

- ...children must do a daily "Check In" with their parents, e.g., when they get home from school, or before dinner, homework, or bed.



During the "Check In" parents ask open ended questions re. the child's day, e.g.,

1. What was the best part of your day?
2. What part of your day did you not like?
3. What made you happy today?
4. What made you uncomfortable today?

**The purpose of the "Check Ins" is to give the parent an opportunity to take their child's "emotional temperature,"** i.e., to see how they are feeling and to identify any experiences that may cause the child to feel particularly good, bad, or uncomfortable.

**Any experience that causes the child to feel uncomfortable should be investigated further,** i.e., ask more questions and perhaps meet with the individual who made the child feel uncomfortable.

If, as a result of this investigation, the parent becomes concerned for their child's interpersonal safety, urge them to call 1-800-4-A-CHILD to gain a better understanding of the situation and how to respond for the safety of their child.

**Note:** if parents need ideas re. how to engage their children in daily "check ins," I have found these Websites to be helpful:

[Boys & Girls Clubs of America: Emotional Check-Ins for Kids - 5](#)

[Ideas for Discussing Feelings](#)

[Technotes: 14 Editable SEL Check-in Templates](#)

[Hands & Voices: Checking in with Kids Creates Safety](#)

## ii) **Surprises vs. Secrets**

### **Family Rule:**

...in our family we **DO NOT** keep "secrets," instead we keep "surprises." The difference is that "surprises" are meant to be shared at the right time. If anyone ask you to keep a secret, tell your parent and/or a trusted adult.

**Note:** If appropriate, share with the child's family that individuals who maltreat (i.e., physically, sexually and emotionally abuse children) "groom" children to keep secrets. Initially such secrets are fairly benign, e.g., a piece of candy, a hug, a bit more "special" time away from the group of other children, etc. Over time, the abuser demands that the child keep bigger and increasingly sinister secrets, e.g., inappropriate touching, yelling, hitting, etc. As such, children must learn NOT to keep secrets, especially when ask to do so by an adult or older child.

## (c) Summary

### i) Title "**Their topic, Your task.**"

(1) Their topic = existing "Family Rules" for their children's safety

(a) Your task = build on existing "Family Rules" to enhance the parent's ability to prevent, or at least reduce the duration and impact of maltreatment, as experienced by all of their children, with a particular focus upon their child with a

disability

i) Your thoughts... reactions... questions... suggestions?

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"Observing, Understanding, and Responding to Child Maltreatment: How Knowledge Creates Empowerment and Action for Families"