



Presentation Title: Start Safe: A Fire and Burn Safety Program for Preschoolers and Their Families

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I. Program/Project Overview:

Fire and burns are a leading cause of injury and even death for children, especially preschool aged children. To teach children and their families about how to be safe from fire and burns in their homes, Safe Kids Worldwide partnered with One2One Communications, the National Head Start Association, and fire safety experts through support from a generous fire prevention and safety grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/FEMA to create Start Safe: Fire.

Start Safe: Fire is a free educational program designed to teach children ages 3 to 6 and their families about fire safety, and provides educators the tools they need to deliver important fire safety information. Through the program, children will learn to identify things that are hot and to stay away, to call a grownup for help when they see something unsafe, and to help their families practice family fire drills. Parents and caregivers will learn tips for preventing fire and burn injuries. Safety messages are delivered to children, parents, and caregivers through educators, local Safe Kids coalitions, and the fire service.

II. Formative Evaluation - Planning

Research was conducted using national data to identify the groups most at risk for death and injuries caused by fire and burns. Research found that:

- Each year, an average of 462 children die from fires in homes and over 107,000 children are injured each year from fire or burn related causes.
- Young children are at greater risk of fire and burn injuries and death.
- Families with low-income are at greater risk to fire and other unintentional injuries.
- Young children can learn to recognize and stay away from hot things in addition to basic skills such as correct response to the sound of a smoke alarm.
- Young children are not able to make significant changes to their environment.

Independent survey research showed that 80 percent of fire safety education is done exclusively through elementary schools; however, very few programs existed that were designed specifically to reach preschoolers with age-appropriate lessons.

The goal of the Start Safe Fire programs is to reduce the number of home fire and burn injuries to preschool children. Program objectives are to:

- Reach parents and caregivers with fire and burn safety information
- Provide resources for preschool teachers and administrators to work hand-in-hand with local fire prevention educators

The Start Safe Fire program was funded through an Assistance to Firefighters Grant and has been evaluated for the past three years. Current program materials are available on the Safe Kids Worldwide website.

III. Process Evaluation - Implementation

The program was developed and distributed to nearly 17,000 sites. Pilot tests were conducted in 15 cities and train-the-trainer workshops were conducted with fire safety educators to gain insight and feedback on program materials. An evaluation survey card was included with each packet and the results were analyzed and used to further improve the program and determine that the program was reaching its goals. 97.8% of respondents rated the program as “Excellent” or “Above average.” Suggestions made by educators throughout the evaluation process were incorporated into a revised version of the program and subsequently an additional 50,000 packets were distributed to Head Start teachers and other educators nationwide.

IV. Impact Evaluation – Short Term Results

All survey respondents observed a change in students’ awareness of things in their homes that might be hot. 82.2% of educators reported students were definitely more aware of things in the home that are hot or can be hot. 17.8% reported students were somewhat more aware of these things.

V. Outcome Evaluation – Long Term Results

More time is needed to determine if fire and burn rates will decrease among our target population. Evaluation is ongoing as the program continues to be used in preschools throughout the country.

- **Recommendations for others:** From our experience with this project, we found it was important to:
 - Focus on a single concept for this age group
 - Encourage educators to “stick to the script”
 - Keep lessons short. Repeat lessons over time
 - Remember partnerships are important – work with teachers, fire service, and parents
 - Prioritizes key messages with the GREATEST potential to save lives
 - Use simple developmentally appropriate messaging for children
 - Include messages specific to the role of parents and caregivers in keeping children safe at home from fires and burns
 - Establish relationships with Head Start administrators and fire service members and encourage them to work together to make this program most successful

Conclusions: The Start Safe program underscores the need for early childhood fire and burn safety education and reinforces the importance of involving parents and caregivers to help keep children safe from fire and burn injuries.