

# Keeping Our Youngest Children Safe: A Softer Approach to a Tough Topic



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## Problem...



- Abuse and neglect are tough topics.
- As a result, most adults try to avoid the topic.
- Avoidance results in a lack of awareness and understanding of risk factors and prevention strategies.
- When adults don't talk, children experience more abuse: more frequency, longer length and greater severity.

While conference presentations, newspaper articles, and webinars help, learning opportunities are simply:

- too infrequent,
- too brief, &
- often too disconcerting to effectively inform and involve parents and professionals in maltreatment prevention efforts.



## Rather than focus on the problems...

- Less focus on scary statistics
- Less focus on guilt
- Less focus on helplessness
- Other peoples' kids
- “Experts” must give presentation



## Focus on the solutions that will lead to Child Safety & Success

- Use a visually engaging process or “product” that invites dialogue
- Conveys a sense of warmth, comfort and trust
- Shares critical concepts for both kids and adults
- Shares important resources
- Anyone can share with a little preparation

## Guiding Concept:

- Quilts are common within most cultures.
- Noncommercial quilts are developed via a collaborative, sustainable process that often involves family and community members.
- The resulting quilts are visually engaging, tangible, and often convey a sense of community, comfort and trust.
- Some quilts tell a story; all quilts are made with storytelling.





- How do we use quilts?
- Could Hands & Voices use the quilting process to engage and inform parents and professionals about preventive practices and safety enhancements for our kids – or kids with any disability, or all kids. They all apply!
- Trial “test of change” – three chapters, three quilts. Was it feasible? Was it effective?

- This presentation will share how the design, creation and sharing of quilts can provide an:
  - informal,
  - ongoing,
  - visually rich, and
  - emotionally comfortable context to discuss, learn, and share how to enhance the safety and success of our children.



## Design concepts:

- Use a quilt as a tangible entry point for discussions on child abuse and neglect.
- 5 uniform quilt blocks were created to represent support systems:

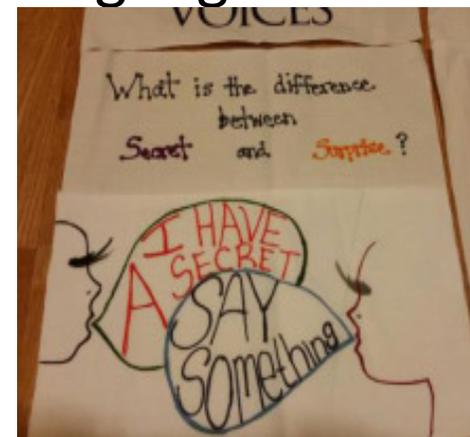
## Strategy...



- 4 blocks are open for creation by chapter members: discussion can come from the following themes:
  - **“Part C IFSP”** ...idea = build safety into the educational documents of our children as the CEC now recommends.
  - **“What is a Loving Family”**
    - ...idea = families are to love, nurture and help children grow
  - **“Right to say NO”** ...idea = children know that they have the right to say “NO” + why, how, when and where this right can be used + changes over time + what to do if that right is not respected



- **“Friends”** ...idea = how to make and keep healthy friendships: reduce loneliness, enhance social knowledge and involvement in age- appropriate activities
- **“Language”** ...idea = target teaching vocab re: feelings/experiences, how to get the attention of a busy adult if safety is an issue, listen to gut feeling about experiences.  
Tell and keep telling until an adult listens.
- **“Children’s Literature”** ...idea = parents read stories with child exploring holistic knowledge and language kids need to increase their safety:  
Alex and the Scary Things
- **“Secrets vs. Surprises”** ...idea = children learn the key concept “surprises” vs. “secrets”



- **Attachment:** “Not the Mother” and checking in
- **Vocabulary:** Feelings, Boundaries, Figuring out the Social World
- **Knowing Caregivers:** asking questions
- **Simple safety rules:** Hygiene, Be Gentle, Check First, Stay Together, Hold My Hand, body teaching: private/public etc.
- **Someone is Watching**



Birth to Three  
Considerations:  
**Remember your  
Maslow**

- **“Why”...purpose:**

- Create another modality for teaching and discussing the issue of child abuse and neglect.

- Making this discussion visual and tactile can make a necessary topic more approachable for families, providers and eventually (maybe) kids.

- Creating a friendly group process to allow for information sharing, tools , tips and stories among parents and providers.



# Getting Help:

## Always include reporting information

- All calls are anonymous and toll-free
- Professional crisis counselors
- Provide assistance in over 200 languages, including interpreters
- Can assist you by providing options based on the situation you describe
- Help you with filing report: where, how, what



National Child Abuse Hotline

[1-800-4-A-Child](tel:18004ACHILD)

[1-800-422-4453](tel:18004224453)

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)

## “How”...the process:

- Convene a group of parents to discuss the quilt project/four topics open to each chapter.
  - Note: Colorado’s plan
- What’s our “thousand word” picture for each of the four concepts?
- Goal: realistic expectations for time and ability of volunteers.
- Final: Iron-on images and buttons from the children of parent leaders (OUR Children) for a tee shirt quilt feel.





Texas:

- Nine square blocks, 12x12 squares finished.
- Sashing goes from a dark bottom left corner to gradually to the lighter top right corner.
- The Texas quilt is machine pieced and quilted.

## 1. Guidebook needed:

- Talking points, reflections, resources, etc.
- Travels with each quilt.
- Sign in area to gather more feedback.

## 2. Degree of difficulty perception:

- Who, me, quilt??
- How to include members with a variety of skill sets
- Generating ideas, creating blocks, piecing, quilting, presenting all needed.



Lessons Learned...

Once we got going: we learned...

- Had a hard time limiting ideas to space available.
- Focusing on future sharing of topics with adults made design easier.
- During the design or quilting sessions: we are active listeners with resources, not professionals or police.
- Future quilts: elementary → high school themes are possible, but more intensive training would be needed.





**WOW!**

- *Making the quilt took less time than making all the choices for thread, sashing, fabric, etc.*
- *It is hard to believe that it has been almost a year in the making (literally and figuratively) but I have enjoyed and valued this process very much. Parent Guide in Texas*
- When we share the quilt, the universal reaction is “Wow! That brings the safety concepts straight to the heart.”

“When” ...we hope the quilts will be used:

- We hope the quilts will be included in the OUR Children’s booth materials.

### Training needed:

- Talking points on sharing quilts
- What to do if discussions are too personal/sad/urgent : Be ready for disclosure
- How to draw people in to the discussion without overwhelming them.
- Closing on a good note.



**A Request...**

Prior to the 2016 Hands & Voices Leadership Conference, chapters have been asked to commit to one or more of the following:

- Share OUR Children material at a local, state, or regional event;
- Produce one to two thematic quilt squares;
- Identify a local/regional resource (i.e., individual or organization) with expertise in both children with disabilities **and** maltreatment.



**Next steps:  
Expectations...**

## Pinterest page:

- [kjbeanne/hv-quilt-ideas/](#)

## Wiki page:

- Archive of OUR presentations, Bright Spot videos, and more

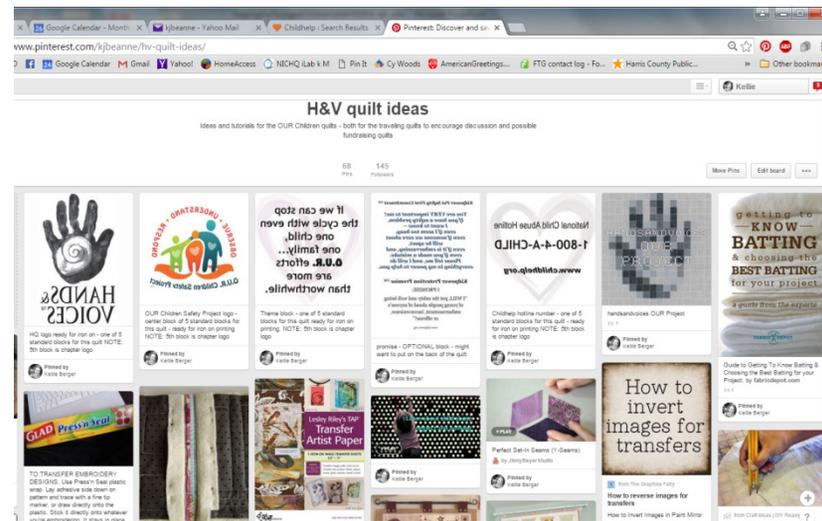
Google: *Deaf Child Abuse Wiki*

## Monthly teleconference call

## Handout

## What can your organization do?

## Resources...





- A child can't learn without feeling safe.
- Because of you, maybe one more child will escape maltreatment today.
- Join with your local chapter in creating a teaching quilt today!



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**Contact  
Information  
OUR Team for the  
QUILT Project**