

REDUCING RISKS

Adapted from presentation by Dick Sobsey titled Violence and Disability, Reducing the Risks,¹ the following represents a framework for promoting and enhancing safety in any setting where people with developmental disabilities receive services.

Reducing the Vulnerability of Individuals

- Teach communication.
- Teach choice.
- Encourage cooperation, not compliance.
- Teach sex education.
- Teach personal safety skills.

Avoid Predatory Caregivers

- Complete criminal background checks for new staff.
- Pre-screen new staff. (In California for health facility employees, use the Interactive Voice Response Unit (IRVU) database to determine if the employee has been denied clearance in the past. Contact the Department of Health, Licensing and Certification, for further information on this system)
- Always carefully check references.
- Look for problems with authority during the interview process.
- Assess the applicant for positive care giving traits.

Train and Support Staff

- Encourage healthy bonding between employees and individuals receiving services.
- Discuss any abuse problems openly.
- Train reporting.
- Support good staff.
- Allow staff to contribute to solutions.
- Teach effective behavior management.
- Always protect those who report possible abuse.

Create and Support Inclusion

- Encourage participation as members of the community.
- Contribute to community crime prevention.
- Minimize isolation
 - ✓ Help people build healthy friendships.
 - ✓ Encourage appropriate sexual relationships.

¹ Sobsey, Dick (1994) Violence in the lives of People with Disabilities: The End of Silent Acceptance? Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks