Self-Advocates and Researchers Sharing Leadership on the Development of a Violence Prevention Program

Rosemary B. Hughes,1 Susan Robinson-Whelen,1 Tina Hunt,1,2 Jason Billehus,1,2 Rebecca Goe,1 Katie Arnold,3 and The Safety Project Consortium

1 Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities, University of Montana; 2 People First, Missoula, Montana; 3 Institute on Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago

Background
People with intellectual disabilities (ID) are at high risk for abuse. Unique risks include: perception of being easy targets for victimization, communication barriers, difficulty identifying treatment as abusive, reporting abuse, and recognizing abuse as a crime. Lack of education about safety from abuse.

There is a need for the development and systematic evaluation of a safety program for people with ID.

Study Objectives
- To design The Safety Class, an accessible group safety program for adults with ID
- To use Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in which disability partners and researchers work closely together in every phase of the study
- To pilot test, refine, and fully test The Safety Class with Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

The Safety Project Consortium
Community Advisory Board
- Six self-advocates from People First chapters in Montana
- A. Heist, L. Howard, T. Hunt, O. Kinkaid, J. Billehus, and K. Valentine
- Meets monthly in person with research staff and CIL advisor M. Millin
- Advises on wording, content, format, and images used in The Safety Class.

National Advisory Board
- Three self-advocates each partner with a disability rights mentor
- J. Headours and L. A. Davis, E. Bailey and M. Bailey; L. Cesal and K. Arnold
- Meets quarterly by phone with research staff and consultants
- Monitors progress and provides input on all aspects of the project

Investigative Team
R. Hughes, PI; S. Robinson-Whelen, Co-PI; R. Goe, Research Associate; K. McDonald, Consultant; M. Schwartz, Consultant; K. Garner; T. Carmell, C. Simpson, T. Marlat, and K. Murphy, and K. Kunkleman, Research Assistants

Description of The Safety Class
The 8-week Safety Class helps people with ID learn about safety in relationships.

Topics
- Communication Skills
- Healthy Boundaries
- Nature and Types of Abuse
- Relaxation Training
- Respect in Relationships
- Warning Signs of Abuse
- Safety in Relationships
- Safety Planning
- Coping with Trauma
- Help Seeking
- Disability Rights

Changes to ASAP
- Adapted pacing for people with ID
- Used plain language
- Reduced words per page
- Included more images
- Added reinstruction
- Included more practice and role-playing
- Modified and abbreviated the content

Facilitating The Safety Class

Facilitator Training Program
CIL staff facilitators attend a two-day training program and weekly phone consultation. Topics in the training program include:
- Recruitment and enrollment procedures
- Confidentiality; mandatory reporting
- Class content and process
- Group management

Facilitator Manual
The scripted 388-page manual is written in plain language, formatted in large print and text, compiled by the project staff, and mailed to the 12 CILs with other class materials.

Evaluating The Safety Class
- We are testing The Safety Class in a randomized, controlled study with 12 CILs across the nation.
- Participants (N=188) are randomly assigned to either The Safety Class or the regular services of their CIL. We expect class participants to show greater improvements on safety-related measures than the other participants.
- We are using a within- and between groups pre-post and three month follow-up design.
- We will complete the trial by May 2016!