

Bridges to People Safety Project for Individuals With Very Limited Verbal Skills

Project Goal: The goal of this three-year project is to incorporate Kidpower's success-based emotional and physical safety and self-advocacy skill-building trainings into the curricula and standard practices of a broad representation of health, education and human services agencies serving people with developmental disabilities who cannot speak at all or who have very limited verbal skills, both close to home and around the world, as well as in the support structure parents, guardians and advocates provide for these individuals.

Objective #1: Adapt Kidpower's current materials, trainings and Successful Practice coaching techniques specifically for individuals who can't speak or have limited verbal skills due to developmental delays. This will include the following steps:

Step 1. Conduct Needs Assessment among professionals and family members working with this population to see what adaptations need to be made to our current materials and training program.

Step 2. Publish findings with a proposed curriculum and materials changes and make widely available, including through our website, for people to review and comment on.

Step 3. Produce two draft (2) *Teaching Manuals* for educators, program staff, and parents/advocates about *Bridges to People Safety for Individuals With Very Limited Verbal Communication Skills* to use in teaching Kidpower skills to the participants in their care, on their own, on an ongoing basis — one (1) manual will be aimed at teaching people with no or limited verbal communication skills and the other will be aimed at teaching people with developmental delays with a fair amount of verbal communication skills.

These cartoon-illustrated manuals will contain, in very simple words and pictures, the following five (5) skill sets/concepts:

1. Protecting yourself from hurtful words;
2. Being aware, calm, and confident;
3. Moving away and checking first;
4. Stopping unwanted touch and teasing; and
5. Being persistent in getting help.

Step 4. Produce two (2) sets of curriculum and lesson plans on how to integrate the teaching of the above skills in the schools' curriculum or organizations' standard practices using the *Bridges Teaching Manuals* — one (1) for people with no or limited verbal communication skills and one (1) for people with a fair amount of verbal communication skills.

Each skill-set section will depict a series of 'building blocks' involved in teaching that skill set/concept, and the application of that concept in a variety of contexts/situations by showing how to respond to special challenges in various real-life situations.

Step 5. Field-test the effectiveness of these materials and the training program through working with professionals and family members in different agencies/settings/schools serving different ages of individuals with very limited speech due to developmental delays. Make adjustments and field-test again.

Step 6. Produce a film with step-by-step visual demonstrations of each teaching module that will be available through our website and as a DVD.

The film will contain a total of 15 short clips (total time approximately 1.5 hours) depicting how to execute the 5 basic skill sets/concepts outlined above for people with developmental disabilities at each of the three (3) following skill levels:

1. No verbal skills
2. Limited verbal skills
3. Fair amount of verbal skills

Objective #2. Provide **150** people with developmental disabilities who can't speak or have limited verbal skills, with self-advocacy and personal safety trainings to keep themselves emotionally and physically safe and reduce their risk of being exploited or (re)victimized by *practicing* simple techniques for detecting and deterring potential harassment, violence and abuse from strangers, bullies, peers and people they know and trust.

This training will give participants the opportunity to apply empowerment, self-advocacy, positive social interaction and personal safety concepts and turn them into skills through role-plays in a safe, anxiety-reducing, competence-building way that is age- and ability-appropriate and culturally sensitive. The skills taught will be individually-tailored to each person's physical, developmental and verbal communication abilities. Skills will be broken down in small steps, incrementally increased, repeated and practiced until successfully integrated by the students.

Objective #3. Where schools and organizations have a structure for parent/caregivers involvement, provide **50** parents/guardians with Parent Education and/or Joint Parent/Participant Safety training and coaching on how to reinforce the newly developed Kidpower skills, using the new cartoon-illustrated *Bridges to People Safety For Individuals With Very Limited Verbal Communication Skills Teaching Manual* with the people with disabilities in their care and incorporate these skills into their family/caregiver support structure.

Objective #4. Provide **50** special education teachers and health and adapted program staff with professional trainings and individualized follow-up coaching on how to teach on their own the new skills to people with disabilities who can't speak or have limited verbal skills in their care, including how to incorporate the new skills into their special education lesson plans or organizations' standard practices using the new *Bridges to People Safety For Individuals With Very Limited Verbal Communication Skills Teaching Manual*. We will also prepare educators and program staff to teach these concepts and skills to parents and other family members or caregivers.

We will start by discussing with teachers and program staff how they can maximize the impact of the trainings with the people in their care, and what level of coaching they may need personally in order to feel confident enough to start practicing skills with their students. We will observe what works for them in terms of getting them to actually practice the skills with their students and build the skill level from there. We will work jointly with them in preparing tailored lesson plans; show them by example how to teach the skills by training their students while they watch; have them practice the skills with their students on their own; and continue to build their skill level until they feel confident enough to practice all the skills with their students on an ongoing basis.

For more information, please contact Irene van der Zande at Irene@kidpower.org or 1-800-467-6997 Ext. 6#