

# Safe Futures: Module 1 Online Training

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## Problem

National estimates indicate that between 3.3 and 10 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year and that children under the age of five are disproportionately present in households experiencing domestic violence. Head Start and Early Head Start programs confirm that a large percentage (between 17 and 40 percent) of families they serve are affected by domestic violence. While local programs have developed a range of strategies to assist these children and families, many staff report that they often feel ill-equipped to adequately address this issue.

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## Objectives

After completing the activities in this module, the learner will be able to:

- Identify and discuss feelings about domestic violence and how these feelings might affect work with families, including men.
  - Explain and discuss the definition and dynamics of domestic violence, respecting issues around gender and culture.
  - Identify and promote the characteristics of healthy relationships between intimate partners in their work with families.
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## Analysis

### Learner Profile

**Age:** Adults ranging in age from 22-60

**Sex:** Primarily female

**Educational level:** Varied from GED to advanced degrees and MSWs, with the majority not having undergraduate or advanced degrees; some with credentials in family development; a significant amount with English as a second language and/or limited literacy skills.

**Prerequisite knowledge and skills:** Literacy levels at 7th grade or above; knowledge of family support principles and the family partnerships agreement process.

**Socioeconomic background:** Low- to middle-income

**Learning style and preferences:** Face-to-face instruction with lots of peer-to-peer networking possibilities and the potential for a mentor relationship; videos, phone and video conferencing, and role-playing experiences and other interactive experiences.

**Motivation:** Workers already working with families experiencing domestic violence and feeling ill-equipped to handle these situations; some may be required by agency and motivated to participate in order to keep their jobs.

### The Learning Context

**Resources and Constraints:** Through our research, we concluded that a training of this sort will not be successful without a face-to-face component. However, we also found that there are significant

challenges that family workers face when they are asked to attend a face-to-face training. The most common response has been cost and time in terms of travel to and from remote, rural areas to a training event both for the learner and instructor. Other challenges include differences in experience, skills, and education (ranging from GED to Master's degrees); time away from job responsibilities; flexibility of training events; child care; and language differences.

**Instructional Technology:** Our research indicated that, for the most part, family workers would be open to a technology-based learning component, but cautioned that a face-to-face component is essential. One comment indicated that a technology-based component might be beneficial to those who are hesitant about using technology but who need to become familiar with it. Another commented that learners could use a self-paced workbook and mail it back and forth to an instructor for feedback, providing a way to do distance education that's not dependent on a computer. Respondents had mixed emotions about satellite broadcasting, but many were positive.

**Access to Technology:** It seems that many family workers have access to and feel relatively comfortable using phone conferencing, e-mail, the Internet, and computers with CD-ROM drives. A few very rural areas do not have Internet access, but many respondents commented that the centers that are not currently online will be soon.

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## Design

This 8-week online training is based upon Module 1 of the curriculum *Safe Futures*. The curriculum was originally designed to be an instructor-led training conducted with Head Start staff who work with families experiencing domestic violence (not people currently experiencing domestic violence).

The original curriculum was designed not only to increase knowledge and skills of individuals, but to support the application and integration of that knowledge and those skills into practice. This was done through the development of implementation plans attached to each module, work with supervisors to provide ongoing support to family workers, and technical assistance to promote the adoption of partnerships and management systems that support best practice. An assessment process allows training participants to identify their strengths and training needs, as well as measure their progress in attaining their learning objectives.

While this online training adapts activities from the original, instructor-led version, it also makes the most of the technology-based medium by including movies, digital stories, and links to Internet resources. To compliment the online training, I also developed activities that have learners work collaboratively with people they work with. I increased opportunities for application in this course. In week 3, I have learners talk to people they work with to see how they can focus on a specific topic covered in the training. I then have the learner return to these ideas in the Action Plan in Week 6. The Action Plan is greatly expanded from the one in the original curriculum. In the original, the trainer just asks participants to write down some ideas if they have them, but does not focus on this. In this course, I have the learners develop an entire Plan and submit it to the class and the facilitator for review and comment. This also allows other learners to get ideas from their peers. There is also a detailed tutorial users can do through to help them generate ideas for their Plan.

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## Competencies

This project meets competencies 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, and 16. A description of how this project meets these competencies is included below.

### ***1. Take a systems view.***

In converting the first module of the Safe Futures curriculum into a 6-week, facilitated online course, I was very aware of whether the content of this course would be appropriate for an online course. One area of concern is that the course could bring up deep emotions in participants. For this reason, I decided to only convert Module 1 to an online course and have Modules 2-5 remain instructor-led sessions where a trainer could help participants sort through feelings that might have come up during the training.

### ***2. Use cycles of reasoning as tools for problem solving.***

To develop the instructor-led curriculum that this course is based on, we followed the ADDIE model. The first phase of the course analyzed the need in the Head Start field for training in this area and whether a technology-based solution would be appropriate for the content and audience. Results of this evaluation found that there is tremendous need in the field for this training and that a blended technology solution is appropriate. I found that developing an online course for Module 1, which lays the foundation for the rest of the training, would allow trainers to make the most of instructor-led sessions for Modules 2-5.

### ***4. Be a lifelong learner and professional.***

I helped develop the instructor-led training that this course is based upon. To broaden my co-worker's understanding of how this curriculum could be implemented, I decided to convert the first module into an online course. I chose appropriate instructional strategies and technologies for the content, learners, and field.

### ***8. Apply various theories/strategies and current research, and consider local needs and constraints to design activities and experiences for learning***

Due to the nature of the content, I felt it was appropriate to follow a social constructivist model of learning. For this reason, I designed a facilitated course that includes a lot of interaction with the facilitator and learners' peers.

The original curriculum employs a great deal of collaborative learning experiences, many of which I kept. However, I also changed some and added to others. I incorporated the use of digital stories and online resources, which expand upon the information in the text and provide a different perspective for learners. I then ask learners to revisit the digital stories to see how what they've learned is reflected in the stories.

### ***9. Design learning and performance products and resources that reflect an understanding of the diversity of learners and groups of learners***

One major concern I had with this training was users' limited computer literacy. To help meet this, I created a quick tutorial/introduction to how the course is organized. Throughout the course, I tried to give thorough instructions for those with limited skills. Learners with a more advanced understanding of online courses could skip these sections. I also built in areas for users to ask questions, and so forth.

For example, Week 6 includes a quick tutorial on how to develop an Action Plan.

### ***10. Develop products and resources to support learning and performance***

This site employs appropriate message design principles. The design was meant to be inviting and also somber, due to the content. Media includes videos, links to digital stories, editable PowerPoint documents, and tutorials.

### ***12. Assess student/participant learning***

To assess student learning, each week has an activity, in many cases this takes the shape of a discussion board. The final assessment is a tool for future learning, where learners are asked to develop a detailed Action Plan using what they learned in the course.

***16. Employing effective strategies (e.g., team leadership, collaboration, accountability), manage an endeavor.***

This project was developed in close collaboration with the developer of the instructor-led training. I managed the development of the online course, however.