

## **Leave No Child Unattended: Use Active Supervision to Keep Children Safe**

Nancy Topping-Tailby: Hello and welcome to Leave No Child Unattended: Use Active Supervision to Keep Children Safe. My name is Nancy Topping-Tailby and I am a staff member at the Head Start National Center on Health. I'm joined today by Amanda Bryans, Director of the Education and Comprehensive Services Division of the Office of Head Start, to talk about strategies to make sure that no child enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start is ever left unsupervised. We wish to acknowledge Ann Johnson from the Office of Head Start Region 7 and Tina Bernskoetter, the Executive Director of the Missouri Head Start Association who previously worked with Amanda to coordinate Office of Head Start training on child supervision.

The Office of Head Start, together with the Head Start National Center on Health/Early Head Start National Resource Center, the Head Start National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, and the Head Start National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations, is hosting a week-long series of interactive webinars and online discussion on active supervision to help you learn more about effective ways to supervise the infants, toddlers, and preschool children in your care. The National Center on Health is pleased to provide this webinar to launch the week on active supervision, and we hope that you will be able to participate in each of the scheduled events. If you had an opportunity to listen to the recorded remarks from acting Office of Head Start Director Ann Linehan, you know that improving child supervision is a major focus of the Office of Head Start. The Office of Head Start has worked with the Head Start national centers to highlight the importance of intentional, focused, and constant supervision. Now it's my pleasure to introduce Amanda Bryans, Director of the Education and Comprehensive Services Division at the Office of Head Start. Amanda?

Amanda Bryans: Thank you so much, Nancy. It is a pleasure for me to be here with you today, and I am really gratified by the amount of interest that we have in this webinar and the number of people who are on. The first thing I want to say is thank you for the work that you do every day on behalf of children and families throughout the United States of America. You have so many reasons to be proud. The second thing I want to say is that we don't think anyone leaves a child unattended on purpose. We think that it happens because human beings have imperfect memories. It doesn't matter how smart you are or how not smart you are. It doesn't matter how busy you are, how much you're multitasking or how much you're not multitasking. It can happen to anybody.

If you leave this webinar today with one thought, it should be to recognize this can happen to me. It can happen to even the best staff in my program. We think once you get that, you really believe that, you will have traveled far down the path to making sure that it never happens again, because when you recognize that it happens to good people who care about kids and work hard, you recognize that you need to have a lot of what we call redundant systems in place, and I think you're going to learn a lot about this idea of active supervision, which is a really, really effective way to prevent this. I want to say to you that I ask everyone to imagine what it would -- you would feel like if you inadvertently left a child behind for a period of time. Imagine what it would feel like to be the child, to be by yourself, to realize you're alone, you know you're not where you're supposed to be, your group is gone, you don't know where your mommy or your daddy is, and you don't know what's happening. Imagine what it would feel like if you needed to go to the bathroom and you waited as long as you could and you couldn't hold it anymore. Imagine what it would feel like to wonder if anybody is ever going to come and get you.

You're little. You know, you're two years old, you're three years old, you're all by yourself on a bus or you're out in a street wandering because you, you walked away from your center or you're on a playground, or you're even in a classroom for a shorter time. You're not where you're supposed to be. I think imagining that is part of what's necessary to, again, really putting the prevention in place that we need in order to avoid this. I think too often we see in notes about these incidents that the child was unharmed, and I think what we're going to talk about today is that when children get left, they're not unharmed. They're scared, they're often traumatized, and they often have fears that linger with them for a long time after one of these events.

So I want you to feel like this is something that happens, but it is preventable. You're on the right path by participating in the webinar today. I hope that you can really participate actively. We're talking about active supervision of children. Let your mind really be free to think about incidents that have happened, what could have prevented it, what you're going to do next, and we will get to talk again at the end after Nancy provides you with more specifics about active supervision. Nancy?

Nancy: Thanks, Amanda. As Amanda said, later in the webinar she will answer some of your questions about child supervision. So please type your questions in the chat box at any time as you listen to today's webinar, and Amanda will answer as many questions as time allows. Today we will provide an introduction to active supervision, a child supervision technique that is used in child care and early education programs throughout the world. We will also show you the "Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision" page on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center where you can find resources from the Head Start National Centers to help you supervise the children in your care. And you will have an opportunity to participate in an "Ask the Expert" Q&A with Amanda at the end of the webinar. As you know, a child's safety depends on staff knowing where every child is at all times. This also means that staff inspect the indoor and outdoor environments the children use, remove any hazards, observe children closely, and respond quickly to prevent injury to a young child who is still learning how to judge what is safe to do.

We are responsible for the safety of the children during the time they spend with us including when they travel to and from our programs on a Head Start bus. Data from all regions tell us that children are more likely to be left alone when they ride on Head Start buses and during transitions. Supervising children can be challenging because there are multiple transitions throughout the course of the day. Active supervision can help you plan effective ways to supervise children as they move from one location to another within a Head Start center or family child care home, when they go outside for outdoor play or on a field trip, and when they arrive or leave the program at the end of the day on a Head Start bus or with their family. Supervision is essential to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of children. It minimizes the risk of harm to children by preventing injuries, illness, and accidents. It promotes positive learning environments and experiences for children and their caregivers. Good supervision is critical to quality, and supervision is in everything you do. But supervision is much more than just watching the children. It involves all of your skills as a teacher and caregiver. And it's about using strategies and techniques that promote effective supervision practices that create a safe environment for children.

Supervision is your responsibility and commitment to the families who have trusted you with their children. It is also your responsibility and commitment to the children who rely on you for guidance, nurturing, protection, and support. Active supervision offers effective strategies for staff to look, listen,

and engage to prevent childhood injuries. It requires focused attention and intentional observation of children. When you use active supervision, you position yourself so that you can observe all of the children, watching, counting, and listening at all times, and you use your knowledge of each child's developmental abilities, and anticipate what children will do. The best way to keep children safe is for teachers and caregivers to be actively engaged with children. This constant vigilance helps children learn safely. Although there's always some level of risk in any activity, staff who are trained in and always practice active supervision can prevent most injuries and make sure that no child is ever left unattended.

The data show that the quality of adult supervision is directly linked to childhood injuries. Active supervision means having the right adult/child ratios and adults who are fully engaged and paying attention to the children in their care so they can quickly get to a child who needs assistance. Studies demonstrate that young children are more likely to get hurt when they are not adequately supervised by adults and especially when they are out of arm's reach. Active supervision includes six basic strategies. First, you set up the environment. Then you position staff. You scan and count. You listen. You anticipate children's behavior, and you engage and redirect children as necessary. We'll discuss each strategy individually. Setting up the environment includes the layout as well as the selection of equipment and materials in the classroom or family child care home. Early childhood environments are not static environments.

Once adults and children enter the room, the environment constantly changes. In order to keep the environment safe and secure when children are present, staff must monitor and maintain hazard-free spaces. The layout of the classroom or area where children play in family child care homes must allow the staff to see and hear children at all times. Centers are set up that do not interfere with each other and allow staff to observe multiple centers at once. This means that there are no blind spots where children can play that you cannot observe. The materials and equipment that children use are developmentally appropriate, and their furniture and toys are in good repair. In this picture, notice that the light toys like the plastic dinosaurs are kept on the top shelf. It's best to keep heavy toys on the bottom shelves in case a child drops them. Items are placed appropriately to allow room for floor-time play away from walkways.

Setting up the environment is especially important in mixed age grouping with young infants and mobile infants or toddlers. In order to create space for tummy time for young infants, designate separate areas for young infants away from areas for mobile infants and toddlers to engage in active play. Staff position themselves close to children, especially in infant settings. This is an essential element of infant/toddler caregiving. Repetitive systems for scanning and counting once young children become mobile can help you engage in responsive caregiving and support children's learning while keeping track of where children are at all times. Once children become mobile, it's important to be able to see and hear all the children and reach a child quickly if needed while managing classroom or administrative tasks so that these responsibilities don't interfere with your ability to observe and effectively supervise the children. For example, you may position yourself closer to a child who's struggling with keeping her hands to herself because her language skills are still emerging, or a newly mobile child is eager to use a climbing structure on the playground, so you will want to stay within arm's reach to prevent the child from falling.

As discussed, a recent research study found that an adult's proximity to a child is one of the most effective ways to prevent injuries. So it's important to be intentional about where staff locate themselves in the classroom and on the playground in order to be able to observe all of the children. Staff need to scan and count children constantly so that they always know how many children there are and where they are. Since we know that children are frequently left unattended during transitions, staff need to be especially vigilant at these times. Scan and count frequently during transitions, monitor attendance, and use redundant systems in which you check and recheck to make sure that you can account for all of the children. Communicate frequently with the other staff on your team so that everyone knows where each child is. It can only take a moment when children are moving from one place to another for a child to wander off or be left behind.

While scanning and counting provide visual cues in your environment, you also need to listen carefully. Sometimes a specific noise or even silence can indicate that there is a problem and someone may be in danger. Being alert means being able to determine what sounds may signal an indication of trouble such as a child who's getting frustrated and may be more likely to hit or bite another child. A bell on the classroom door can alert you to a child who may run out of the room. Anticipating children's behaviors can help you prepare for how children will react to transitions and changes in daily routine so you can determine which children may need more attention and extra support at any given time. Anticipating how to engage children in activities makes it easier to plan ahead for all possibilities. For example, if you know that some activities are likely to be popular, then you can set up the environment to encourage turn-taking by providing tickets for how many children can use a center at one time. You can also plan other activities that are engaging for children who are waiting their turn. You also anticipate children's behaviors based on their developmental level and the skills that they are working to master. For example, a young child with newly emerging language skills who is having trouble communicating may bite out of frustration and might need a little extra support.

A staff member may decide to position herself closer to the child. You also recognize the sometimes more subtle signs that children are feeling ill or stressed so you can provide additional support at any given time. Ultimately, there are times when children will need you to engage and redirect them. When you have close relationships with and know the children in your care, you can individualize for each child. Staff can quickly intervene prior to problems arising by promoting problem-solving skills such as helping a child who's struggling with turn-taking to learn how to share with friends. In addition to supporting the child's development and learning needs, staff can decrease children's challenging behaviors by providing positive behavioral supports. You can find great examples of how to do this from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, or CSEFEL, that has developed user-friendly training materials, videos, and print resources.

You can access these materials from the CSEFEL website at Vanderbilt University and related materials from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning and the Early Head Start National Resource Center on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision is a good place to learn about how to implement active supervision strategies. This new page on the ECLKC and the National Center on Health portal offers you resources about strategies to use with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. And they will also help you learn how you can enhance your management systems to support effective child supervision practices. The Head Start National Center on Health, the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations, and the Early Head Start National Resource Center jointly

developed this new page so you can find related resources from each center all in one page. This part of the page highlights active supervision resources from the National Center on Health, a good place to begin to look at the active supervision fact sheets. Active Supervision At-A-Glance is an easy-to-use handout for you to share with staff and using your agency-wide professional development training on active supervision. You can download Active Supervision At-A-Glance from the Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision page on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. The National Centers worked together to create this Active Supervision poster. Our thanks to the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning that designed the poster as well as Active Supervision At-A-Glance.

You can also download the poster from the Keep Children Safe page on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. It's a great visual to hang in your centers or family child care homes and communicate to all staff that children's safety is everyone's responsibility. We encourage you to post it in all of your classrooms, your family child care homes, and socialization areas, just like you would display required posted policies. You can also share the poster with your policy council, governing body, and Health Services Advisory Committee and with families during parent committee meetings and home-based socializations. Here are some resources recommended by the Early Head Start National Resource Center for actively supervision infants and toddlers and by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning for actively supervision preschool-age children that you can find on the Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision page.

The National Center for Program Management and Fiscal Operations recommends these selected resources to help programs engage governing body and policy council members, program leaders, and managers in understanding the role that they play in making sure that all of your program's systems support effective child supervision.

The National Centers have just released a new toolkit that will help you to find additional resources from each center that you can use to implement or enhance active supervision strategies in your program. Please share it widely with all staff in your program. The toolkit can also be downloaded from the Keep Children Safe Using Active Supervision page. Now we're ready to respond to your questions. If you would like to ask a question and you haven't done so already, please type your question in the chat box now. Are you ready, Amanda?

Amanda: I'm ready, Nancy.

Nancy: So we'll answer as many questions as we can during today's webinar, and then we'll post answers to additional questions at a later date if we run out of time. So, Amanda, let's start with a general question: "What have you noticed as you visited programs around the country about child supervision in Head Start and Early Head Start programs? Are there any examples of great successes that you can share with us?"

Amanda: Well, that's a really good question. I think there are a lot of examples, Nancy, and I don't want to spend much time talking about myself. But also, I worked for years in the program, so I feel like I have a really realistic understanding of the challenges around how to do this well. We did have a case in the last year or two where a stranger tried to abduct a child from a Head Start center. The Head Start center had very well established protocol or policies around child release. And so the person who was kind of at the desk in the center said, you know, "Can I see your ID? Who are you?" Whereupon the person kept insisting that he was a relative and that he could take the child and he knew the child's first and last

name. But she said, "No, you're not on the child release, or you didn't show ID now." And eventually the person left the center. The police were called. They found the person and it was, in fact, an attempted stranger abduction of a child. The agency's procedures protected that child from being hurt. And I think that what's really important is that the staff had the confidence that what they were doing was the right thing. Now, this person, he felt confident, too, and he thought if he insisted enough that he knew the child's first and last name and he was a relative that the staff member would yield. But the staff member knew what her job was, she knew what the policies were, and she refused and very likely saved that child's life and certainly the trauma of being abducted.

So I think that's a great story. We've had also stories where a redundant safety system prevented a child from being left alone on a bus. It's notable that sometimes people take roll or count and get the wrong number or misidentify kids. So there was a case where the driver and the monitor said, "Well, there were kids that got on and kids got off." But the teacher said, "I was expecting all today. I'm just going to take a double check." The bus was still in front of the center and there was still an adult viewing. And the teacher got on the bus, walked to the back, and found the child, or eighteenth child sleeping. In that case, the child was alone for less than a minute.

There was still an adult looking at the bus and they didn't have any monitoring findings, but most importantly, the child had no experience of being left alone and was never at any risk. So it can be done. As I said in the beginning, I think the emphasis needs to be on this idea of really -- It's not just rote. It's not that you're always -- Somebody I think asked a question about how many times taking roll is too many, and that's a really good point. It is not great for kids to be constantly calling their names and requiring them to respond. If you do that too much, it becomes rote and your brain will tune out their little saying "here" or "I'm here" or however they answer, and you will make a mistake. It's more important to use, I think, a variety of strategies to count the kids yourself, to know all the kids' names, and make sure that you're kind of doing the things that prevent boredom from having to make a mistake.

Nancy: Thanks, Amanda. So I'm thinking that I'm going to skip to a question about scanning and counting because you were talking about how many times it's okay to count. So here's a question about: "I scan and count all the time, but sometimes when we're on the playground with other classes and there are a lot of children playing together, it's so much harder to keep track of the children that I'm responsible for. What can I do to make sure that I'm counting the right kids?" What do you say about that one?

Amanda: I think that's a terrific question. I think that also plays into thinking about kind of overall management. One important thing is: How many kids are actually on the playground and is it too many? Not just in terms of the difficulty with counting and watching them all, but just we know that playgrounds are not as safe when there are very many kids using the same equipment. So you want to make sure your playground has the capacity for the number of children that are playing on it. And then you want to make sure that you have good staffing. So it's not a time to lighten up on ratios when you're out on the playground. You need to maintain the same ratios. And you may want to think about some zone supervision. You want to make sure that an adult has every part of the playground under observation and that kids are safe. If there are areas of concern, you know, maybe there's a gate that's not latched, maybe there's a part of the playground where -- we had a playground where the fence got cut regularly. So if there's any kind of opening in the fence or place that a child could get under, that you've got staff placed around that. And then I think you still have -- If you've been given specific

responsibility for 10 children, you need to be really checking in to make sure those 10 children, you know where they are and what they're doing. But, again, I would definitely go to a zone system if you've got a large playground with lots of kids and make sure that all of the areas are under observation. And then certainly before you leave the playground you assemble your group and make sure that you've got everybody.

Nancy: So, Amanda, you didn't talk about name-to-face counts. Did you want to mention that, or do you have some thoughts about that?

Amanda: That's a critical aspect of the whole kind of a fundamental of active supervision that you really know the children who you're working with, and that you know them by name and a little bit by personality, and that will help you, again, do the count in your head. It's not a matter of constantly relying on roll call but that you are going through, you know, "I've got these 10 names. These are the kids I'm responsible for." If you need to write them down, you've got them on a little three by five card and you're making sure that those children are there. I would not hesitate to use name tags early in the year, or if you have a substitute, I think that can really help make sure that children are safer.

Nancy: So we have so many questions coming in. They're fabulous questions. So we're not going to be able to get to all of them, but we will follow up. So let's see if we can answer one last one about transitions because we've talked a lot about transitions being times when children are more vulnerable. So here's one: "I know we need to be especially vigilant during transitions, but what exactly should teachers be doing during transitions? Should they be doing something different or doing what they always do, just doing it more often?"

Amanda: Well, that's another terrific question. I think you're right. Transitions are vulnerable times. We know that a lot of children are inadvertently left when groups are moving from one place to another or going on field trips or any kind of tran-- going down to a different room from the cafeteria. I think you use some of the strategies you know. I think, again, really knowing the children you're working with. I think -- I'm trying to get to multiple questions in one. I think there was another question about: "Should I engage the children in helping count?" I would say you're not going to rely on a child's count as the authoritative, but if you have a child who you know is more likely to be distracted or perhaps to leave or is experiencing a lot of separation anxiety or whatever, that you make them -- you know, you include them, give them a job that keeps them close to you and keeps them engaged during the transition to reduce the chance that they might wander, and you use your face-to-name recognition. I think, again, the positioning of adults is really important. I've seen cases where one teacher assumes that if they get toward the front of a group of children, the other teacher will automatically know that she or he is supposed to stay at the rear. Don't hesitate to be explicit. Say, "I'm taking the front. You stay in the back." Meaning, "You're the last person." Like, you don't let three or four kids get behind you. But be really explicit around what those expectations are so that you're able to keep your group together as you transition.

Nancy: Thanks, Amanda. So I'm sorry, but we are running out of time, so I'm going to have to shut down the questions at this particular point. I'm sorry that we weren't able to get to more of them. So a quick plug, because I know we're close to the end of our time, that we have here a schedule for the rest of the week, and we encourage you to please join some of these other activities that we've planned. Tomorrow, Tuesday, March 3, staff on the Early Head Start National Resource Center will talk specifically about how to apply the concepts of active supervision to the many settings in which you serve infants

and toddlers. Angie Godfrey, the infant/toddler specialist at the Office of Head Start, will moderate this event which will also include a live Q&A and teacher resources from the Early Head Start National Resource Center. On Wednesday, March 4, the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning will explore their in-service suites through the lens of active supervision in preschool environments. There will also be a Q&A with Jamie Sheen from the Office of Head Start and Kristin Ainsley, host of Teacher Time. On Thursday, March 5, the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations will offer a webinar highlighting resources from their center that will help you look at safety from a systems perspective and how program leaders can set the stage for developing a culture of safety. There will also be remarks by David Jones from the Office of Head Start. And finally, on Friday, March 6, join Marco Beltran from the Office of Head Start who will share how two Region 9 grantees, Seeda and Contra Costa, have implemented the Head Start Program Performance Standard on child supervision and how they use redundant systems to make sure all children are accounted for in the classroom and on the playground. So please join us throughout the rest of the week so that you can strengthen your child supervision practices to make sure that no child enrolled in your program is left unattended.

Amanda: Thank you, everybody, and our heartfelt thanks.

Nancy: You can contact us to ask questions, share comments, and reflect on your successes and your challenges as well. And I join Amanda in thanking you and expressing our heartfelt thanks. If you want to email us, please email our center at the address here and type the words "active supervision" in the subject line. We are about to conclude our webinar, but when the webinar ends, there will be a survey poll that can be taken immediately. It will also contain instructions on how to share the link with everyone who watched the webinar with you. Each person who would like a certificate must complete a survey in order to receive one. This concludes our webinar, and on behalf of the Office of Head Start, I join Amanda and the National Center on Health in thanking you for joining us. Bye-bye.

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