Handout C: The Challenge of Prevention

Story 1: Darla

Darla is a 20-year-old mother of three children ages three years, two years, and six months. They all live in a two-room apartment. Her three-year-old son, Carter, just enrolled in Head Start.

When the Head Start worker comes for a home visit, Darla appears very tired. She invites the home visitor to sit and have a cup of tea. The home visitor has a friendly and helpful manner. She asks lots of questions about when Carter was a baby, about doctor's checkups, and about their living situation. The home visitor explains that Head Start is working with families to help keep children from getting hurt at home. She points out wall paint that's chipping, exposed electrical outlets, the open cabinet under the sink with cleaning products, a five-gallon bucket with soapy water on the floor, and an old crib with widely spaced slats and corner posts. The home visitor explains that Head Start can help Darla make her apartment safer for her children.

Story 2: Fallsville Head Start

The Fallsville Head Start program has been running for nearly 30 years. The facilities are old but the staff, parents, and children make it cheery with brightly colored artwork.

Today was hectic all around. It rained in the morning. When it cleared up, the children were eager to play outdoors, although the equipment was wet and slippery. The toilet broke so the teacher was talking with the plumber. The teacher's aide had called in sick and a new parent was filling in. That's when it happened—a child fell off the playground climbing structure onto the dirt underneath and broke her leg.

This was the first broken leg caused by a fall off the climbing structure. But the teacher recalled that over the years they've also had two concussions and two broken arms from falls off the climber.

The health coordinator had recently attended a workshop where she learned that old playground equipment may not be safe and there are new safety standards for heights, railings, and ground covering. She had been meaning to discuss this with the director.

For use with Activity 3