



Safety and Protection: Safety in Public Places, Child Supervision, and Preventing Harm to Children Tip Sheet

For Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS); Refugee Resettlement; Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS); Early Care and Education Providers

As young children explore their environment, they are not always able to understand the risks and dangers they may encounter. All providers can support families by offering information on how to keep children safe both at home and in public places. This Safety in Public Places, Child Supervision, and Preventing Harm to Children Tip Sheet corresponds to page 12, 13, and 14 of the [Raising Young Children in a New Country: Supporting Early Learning and Healthy Development Handbook](#).

Conversation Starters: (or staff, families, and partners can design program-specific questions)

- How are expectations regarding child supervision in the US similar to and different from those in your home country?
- How are the U.S. laws that protect children from harm similar to or different from those in your home country?
- What concerns do you have about your child's safety?

Cultural Considerations:

- Newly arrived families may be vulnerable targets for criminals due to their lack of familiarity with U.S. dangers. Providers can share precautions about interacting with strangers e.g., not sharing personal information such as social security numbers, home address, credit cards, directly or through internet or mail fraud; or by opening the door to announced visitors.
- Some cultures may have more of a communal approach to supervising children (e.g., all adults have a community duty to discipline or watch out for children). The US expectation that a parent is responsible at all times, even when temporarily delegating supervision to another adult, may be unfamiliar to newly arrived families.
- As newcomers, refugees often lack extended family support to help with child care, while previously this type of family or community help was the norm. They also may not be accustomed to leaving their children with strangers.



- It may be common and customary for older siblings to care for younger siblings, with children also contributing to running the household. Learning these skills is typically viewed as helpful for preparing children for adulthood and contributing to the family. As long as such roles do not jeopardize a child's safety and healthy development, it will be up to each family to find a balance between their home country's culture and U.S. culture regarding family roles. National child safety organizations recommend that children under 12 years old should not be left home alone, nor left to supervise younger siblings.
- Parents may continue the methods of supervision with which they are most familiar, such as leaving young children with their older siblings, because they do not understand the dangers and legal consequences of these practices in the US.



Safety and Protection: Safety in Public Places, Child Supervision, and Preventing Harm to Children Tip Sheet (cont'd)



- Many families may view the U.S. child protection system as an unfamiliar government intrusion into family life.
- Refugee families may welcome information about U.S. child protection laws and norms, as well as positive discipline approaches.

Remember to Mention:

- Adult supervision of young children is expected at all times, both inside and outside the home. Parents should be encouraged to help children find a balance between politeness and wariness when interacting with unknown adults
- Children should always be supervised in public places. Particular caution should be used in places near streets or traffic, public playgrounds, or shopping areas.
- In public spaces ask the parents of other children for permission before interacting with their child, such as offering food or drink.
- It is important to be cautious when sharing personal information and details about children with strangers.
- Parents, guardians, and other adults can help to protect children from maltreatment (defined as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or neglect). When parents or guardians learn about their state or local child protection laws, they can help prevent maltreatment, report it when suspected, and work productively with the child welfare system if necessary. Early care providers and their partners can also help educate the child welfare system regarding refugee cultural backgrounds, family strengths and needs.



Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspss/1304>

45 CFR 1304.40 Family partnerships. (b)(1)(ii) and (f)(2)(iii)

Resources on ECKLC:

National Center of Health

- **Child Abuse and Neglect.** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/safety-injury-prevention/child-abuse-neglect>
- **Tips for Keeping Children Safe: A Developmental Guide.** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/safety-injury-prevention/safe-healthy-environments/keep-children-safe.html>

National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

- **Preventing Abuse of Children with Cognitive, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/Disabilities/Staff%20Support%20and%20Supervision/Support%20and%20Supervision%20for%20Staff%20Serving%20Children%20with%20Disabilities/PreventingAbuse.htm>

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

- **Positive Parent-Child Relationships.** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/parent-child-relationships.pdf>

