

Lesson 2

Safety

Guest Speaker

Objective:

To teach safety skills which include personal safety for the babysitter, child safety for the children and household safety where they are sitting.

Activity:

Guest speaker(s) on safety-related issues

Life Skill Addressed:

Problem-solving
Decision making
Concern for others
Personal safety

What to Do . . .

This is a good session to bring in a guest speaker. Try to find those who have experience working with youth. This will familiarize your teens with an expert from the community and also give them a break from you being the only teacher. Possibilities include local fire and police personnel, Army Community Service (ACS), Military Police, Army Public Health Nurse (APHN), EMT, or Child & Youth Services Health Specialist (CYS).

There is a lot of information to cover in this section. The purpose is not to scare the participants. It is to give them the knowledge and skills necessary to make good decisions.

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that the most important thing to remember is that they have been hired to keep the child/ren safe. That is their #1 priority. Handling the unexpected requires the ability to think and use good decision-making skills.



Many homes no longer have landline telephones. If the family you are babysitting for does not have a home phone, be sure to discuss with the parent/guardians how to contact them or other help in the event of an emergency. You will also need to discuss with your parent/guardians how they can reach you while you are babysitting.

If the family does have a home phone, please keep in mind these important tips:

1. Keep a list of important phone numbers handy to save precious minutes in the event of any emergency. Include on-post emergency and off-post emergency numbers.
2. Ask the parent/guardian if they prefer you let the calls go to voicemail or if you should answer the call.
3. When answering a home phone, never identify yourself by name or as the babysitter.
4. Never tell the caller the parent/guardians are not home. Inform the caller that they can't come to the phone, but that you can take a message/phone number. If the caller becomes persistent/abusive or makes you feel uncomfortable or suspicious, hang up and call a trusted adult or the parent/guardian you are babysitting for. Depending on the severity of the situation, you may need to call the police.
5. Don't give out any information unless you know the person calling.
6. Be courteous.
7. If the caller is a telemarketer, simply say "No thank you" and hang up.
8. Do not make or take personal calls unless they are specifically related to the job.

When using a cell phone, it is important to keep in mind:

1. If you have a personal cell phone, be sure to discuss with the parent/guardians any concerns or requests they may have regarding your use of the phone. Reassure them that you will only use your phone to ask them a necessary question, take a call from your own parent/guardians, or in case of an emergency.
2. If there is no landline phone and you do not have a personal cell phone, ask the parent/guardians if they have a cell phone they would be able to leave for you to reach them or emergency personnel in the event of a question or crisis. Your parent/guardians may also want to ensure they have a way of contacting you; therefore, they may have a cell phone they would allow you to use while you are babysitting.
3. The phone needs to be kept on, charged, and nearby. This can save precious minutes in the event of an emergency.
4. Avoid using the cellphone while babysitting, but keep it handy for use in an emergency. Time on the phone takes your focus away from the child/ren.
5. Talk to the parent/guardians before taking photos of their child/ren do not post pictures on any social media without permission.
6. Determine how you and the parent/guardians would like to communicate before they leave. Would they like to receive an update via text message, a call, or a photo? Would they like to be contacted only in the case of an emergency?
7. Decide with the parent/guardians if it is ok for you to use apps or watch videos with the child/ren, then define which ones are appropriate by the family's standards and if there is a limit to the amount of screen time.
8. Adding a passcode to lock your phone will prevent unknowing misuse.



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Things to keep in mind when using a cell phone during an emergency:

- Location information on a cell phone is not as reliable as it is on a landline. For example, if you are calling from an apartment complex, the cell phone will not indicate the apartment number or floor.
- When you call 9-1-1 from a cell phone, signals are sent through the air. Towers pick up the cell phone signal, but they may not be near to where you are. Once the dispatcher answers, be sure to provide them with the city you are calling from and the type of emergency you have. This way, your call can be routed to the most appropriate assistance.
- Be sure to know the address for where you are babysitting.
- Write the home's address and the names and numbers of the parent/guardian on a piece of paper and keep it where easily accessible like the refrigerator for easy access during an emergency.

If a phone (cellular or landline) is not available, consider these tips to ensure you have access to the parent/guardians or another responsible adult to assist in the event of an emergency:

1. Is there access to a tablet, iPad, or laptop that you could use to video call over wifi?
2. Is there an old cell phone that isn't activated but will still give you access to 9-1-1? Though old cell phones cannot receive calls or call numbers other than 9-1-1, wireless carriers are required to complete 9-1-1 calls, even when the phone is not activated. Since the phone can call 9-1-1, do not allow the child/ren to play with the phone. If you disconnect from 9-1-1 during your call, the dispatcher will not have a way to call you back.
3. Is there a neighbor nearby who knows the child/ren are being cared for by a babysitter who can get in touch with the parent/guardians in the event of an emergency?
4. Can your parent/guardian come to check on you a few times throughout the designated time you are caring for the child/ren?

Answering the door

Have a plan for how to handle this. A discussion with the parent/guardian is critical, so you know exactly who and what to expect whenever possible.

1. Always keep doors, windows, and cellar door locked and make sure the parent/guardians show you how the locks work before they leave.
2. Turn off unnecessary lights inside and turn on outside lights.
3. If possible, look out the window/door before answering. If there is not a window or peephole, then ask the individual to identify themselves without opening the door.
4. If it is a service person, tell him/her to call tomorrow to reschedule.
5. If it is a stranger, do not answer the door. If he/she becomes persistent and does not go away, call the police or nearest neighbor for assistance.
6. If there is any suspicious activity (knocking on the door and no one is there, or if you suspect a prowler or prank), call police first then let the parent/guardian know afterward. This should be discussed prior to parent/guardian leaving.
7. Never open the door to strangers.

Personal Safety

Keeping a “cool head” will help ensure safety for both the babysitter and the child/ren. Tell the teens not to panic and not to be careless. Tell them no smoking and no friends. They should not do anything other than babysit!

As a safety precaution, each of them should create a code word to use with their families in case of an emergency. This would be a word or phrase that would alert their family member that they need to be picked up immediately. Using a code word is a way of asking for help without alerting the other person.

However, sometimes, things happen. Here are a few examples of situations and suggestions on how to handle them:

- If they become ill while babysitting, call their parent/guardian or the parent/guardian they are sitting for to discuss what to do.
- If they become concerned because the parent/guardian is late returning, call their parent/guardian or trusted adult for advice/support. They may call the parent/guardian to see why they are delayed, as well.
- If the parent/guardian returns under the influence of drugs or alcohol, do not go in a car with him/her. Use their “code word” and call home for transportation.
- If they must deal with an emergency, be sure all the child/ren are safe. This may mean putting the baby in a playpen, crib, or even on the floor; don’t worry if the baby cries. It is more important that he/she is safe. As soon as they can, return to and calm the baby/child/ren.
- If they get injured while babysitting, tell them to put the baby in a safe location (crib, playpen, or floor) and to bring any other child/ren in the home with them to get the supplies needed. Then treat the injury.
- Tell them to try to remain as calm as possible. Young child/ren are easily frightened if they see adults (or teenagers) around them panicking. Once they have the help they need, take the time to admit how scared they felt to the child/ren and to de-brief. No one expects them to be super-heroes.
- Tell them it is always “OK” to call for help if they are unsure about how to handle any situation.
- Explain how important it is to review anything that happened while they were babysitting when the parent/guardian returns. Let him/her know if “Kyle bumped his head,” or if there were any messages, etc. Communication is the key to a successful relationship with the family.
- If walking, notify your parent/guardian when you are leaving the home or ask an adult to watch you walk home. Consider using an app that can ensure your safety.



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Other situations

Tell them being responsible can sometimes be very uncomfortable or frightening. It is important to discuss some of these matters ahead of time so that the parent/guardian they are working for is very clear about responsibilities. If the discussion does not go well, tell them it is “OK” to reconsider babysitting for that family.

Tell the teens to:

Keep a close eye on the child at all times. If a child disappears and they cannot find him/her, tell them to call parent/guardians first and then others on the emergency contact list. If the situation warrants, contact the police. Don't panic, but continue looking while keeping the other child/ren safe.

Check-in on sleeping child/ren every 15 minutes.

Do not bathe infants even if asked to do so by a parent/guardian. If asked to bathe older child/ren and if they feel comfortable doing it, they must never leave a child/ren alone in the bathtub.

Household chores: Other than cleaning up after yourself and the child/ren, remember that you are there to provide care for the child/ren, not to do housekeeping chores. The safety of the child/ren comes first.

What to Do . . .

Distribute poster board or flip chart paper and markers to teams of participants.

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that keeping the child/ren safe is their first and foremost responsibility. Staying with them at all times reduces the number of accidents. Keeping an eye out for safety and planning ahead also helps prevent emergency situations.

Divide the group into teams and assign a different location (for example, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, hallway, garage, backyard, etc.) to each team. Tell the teams to make a poster with as many safety issues drawn in as they can think of. When the teams are finished, have them share results.

Hang the posters on the walls. Discuss this activity. Ask them:

- “What safety issues did you find?”
- “What happened?”
- “What was the most important thing that happened?”
- “What did you learn?”
- “How can you use this information in the future?”

Activity:

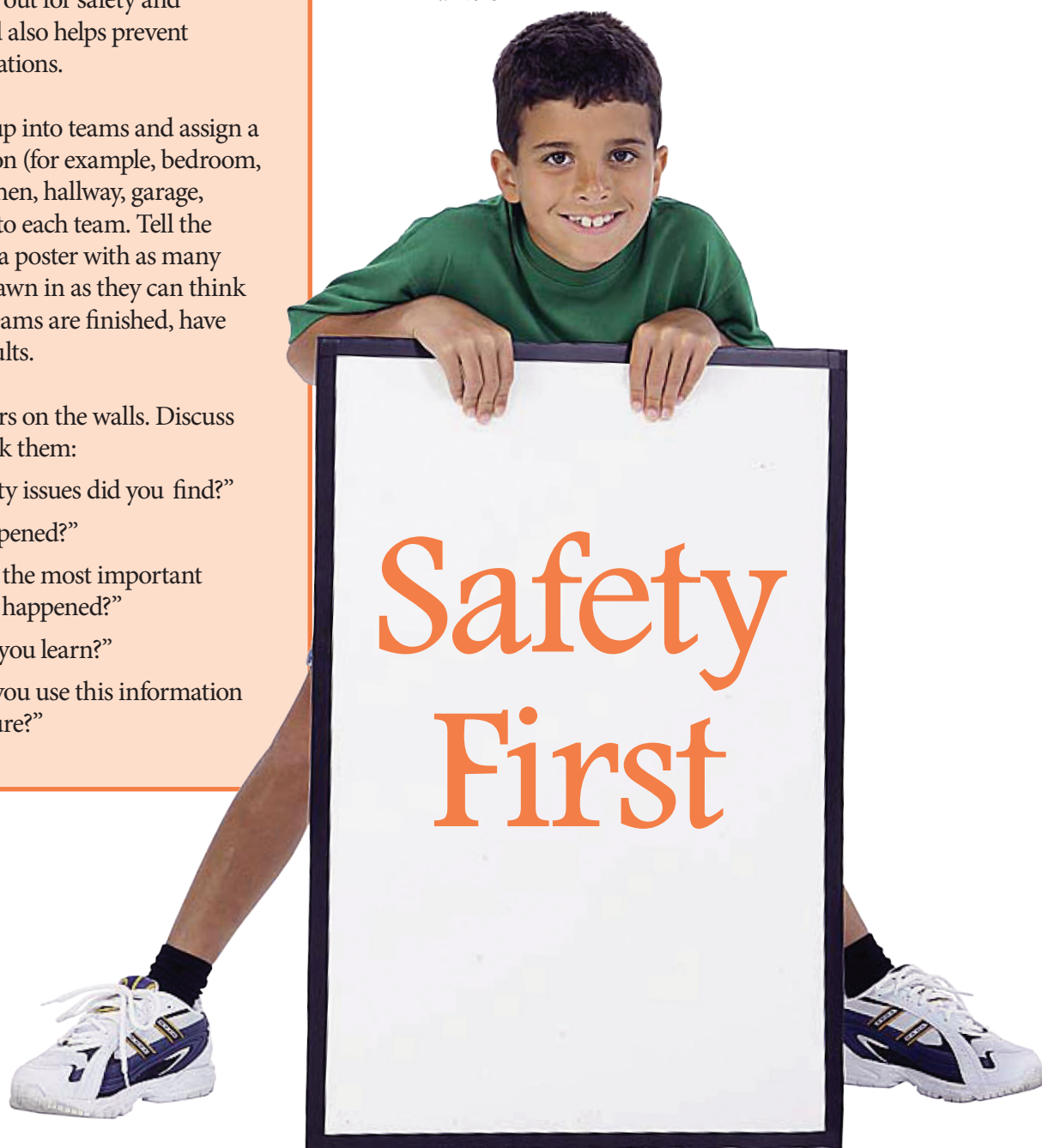
To create safety posters

Life Skill Addressed:

Safety
Concern for others

Materials Needed:

Poster board or flip chart paper
Markers



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Home Safety

Tell the teens when child/ren are supervised, they are much less likely to have accidents. Keep an eye out for safety and try to prevent an emergency by keeping the play area accident-proof.

Here are a few ideas about how teens can become a safety detective and eliminate problems before they arise!

Keep these things out of sight and away from child/ren:

Matches, cigarettes, vaping liquids and pens, keys, plastic bags, medicine, lighters, small objects (beads, marbles, buttons, coins, pins, etc.), knives, scissors, sharp objects, and cleaning supplies.

Outdoor hazards:

Piles of leaves and snow near roads, tall grass, slingshots, trampolines, hanging rings, pools, streets and cars, rope swings, moving swings or sliders, ladders, climbing trees, rakes, hoes, axes, sharp tools, grills, and stray animals.

Keep child/ren away from these items:

Tablecloths, staircases, unfriendly animals, medicine closets and other storage areas, cooking appliances, cords on window blinds, guns and ammunition, electric fans, fires and fireplaces, open windows, stoves (turn handles of pots or pans inward, be sure to check that gas stove knobs are in the off position), hot liquids, plugs and outlets, cords, heaters, radiators, and appliances.



Are there more? You bet!

The list goes on and on, but you get the picture. Carefully watch the child/ren, and you can avoid most accidents. Remember, keeping the child/ren safe is your first priority!

Fire Safety

Tell participants that in a fire, seconds count! Fires can become out of control in a very short period of time. They must be prepared for the possibility of an emergency. Prevention includes keeping matches and lighters out of reach of children and keeping children away from stoves and heaters. Tell them they must always give their full attention to the child/ren, and avoid anything that may distract them from that job.

Fire Safety

Tell the teens that making a plan will save them precious seconds if they discover fire/smoke. **It is important to first check with the parent/guardian on their fire safety plan, and identify if there is already a predesignated meeting place.**

Go over the following steps with them:

1. Plan two escape routes out of the house or apartment. If one route is blocked, there will be another.
2. Gather the child/ren and get them to safety; call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house or cell phone. Do not worry about dressing the child/ren. **Time is precious!**
3. If the house is filled with smoke, stay low and/or crawl.
4. Hot door handles signal fire on the other side; so do not open the door. Find another way out.
5. Do not gather valuables or toys. Take pets, if time allows.
6. Do not go back into the house for anything. You can mention any concerns you may have to firefighters when they arrive.
7. Stay calm and do not panic. The child/ren will be looking to you for reassurance.

If ...

- the child's clothing catches fire, push the child to the floor and roll him/her in a blanket, rug, or something similar until the fire is smothered. Stop, drop, and roll.
- they and the child/ren become trapped; it is important to remain calm and seal off cracks around the door with anything that is available. Signal from a window when help arrives.
- they are trapped, and the room is smoky, get everyone to a window and open it slightly for fresh air. Yell. Hang out a sheet or towel to signal firefighters. Climb out if you are on the ground floor. Do not risk high jumps. Wait for the fire department.

Reassure the participants that this information is not meant to scare them, but to help prepare them for the responsibility of keeping the child/ren in their care safe. Tell them it's hard to remain calm when frightened, but by learning this information, they will be as prepared as possible to do their best!

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Activity Cards - See Appendix page 147 to make copies

What to Do . . . What to Say . . .

After you or the guest speaker have covered all the safety information, divide the group into different teams. Give each team a situation notecard and tell them they have five minutes to create a role play scenario. Have teams do their role plays discussing each one as it is completed. Process the activity by asking them what was most important? What were some similarities among all the skits? What was one key point they learned about safety? Then ask them how they can use this safety information in their lives.

Possible other safety related activities are:

1. Ask participants to find related stories in newspapers and magazines and discuss them in small groups.
2. Utilize photos of or take a field trip to local playgrounds, child development centers, etc. and talk about safe and unsafe situations
3. Work with the teens to identify specific areas in the home that could pose concerns while you are babysitting. How would you handle these issues?

Activity:

Role-play safety situations

Life Skill Addressed:

Concern for others
Social skills
Problem-solving
Decision-making
Personal safety
Stress management

Materials Needed:

See Appendix for activity cards, page 148

Notecards with examples of situations on them such as an unexpected visitor knocks on the door; taking phone messages; the electricity goes out due to a storm; the toilet overflows; the door locks when you take the child/ren outside to play; a toddler spills his/her red juice on the carpet; the parent/guardian who is supposed to drive you home is stumbling around and smells of alcohol; the smoke detector goes off, etc.

Do not include first-aid type situations in this section. Those will be addressed later.



Activity Cards

Unexpected visitor
knocks on the door

The door locks when
you take the child/ren
outside to play

Taking phone
messages

A toddler spills his/her
red juice on the carpet

The electricity goes out
due to a storm

The parent/guardian
who is supposed to
drive you home is
stumbling around and
smells of alcohol

The toilet overflows

The smoke detector
goes off

